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Rationality and mind in early Buddhism.

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RATIONALITY AND MIND
IN EARLY BUDDHISM

A dissertation submitted
for the degree of PhD in
the University of London,
King's College, by

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ABSTRACT: Rationality and Mind
in Early Buddhism -- F. J. Hoffman

The Introduction stipulates the meaning of 'early Buddhism' for this study as 'the Buddhism of the five Nikāyas' and outlines a method of approach which lies on the interface between philosophy and Buddhology. The use of philosophy is not seen as a wholesale imposition of a type of thought as a mold to be set on the Buddhist texts. Instead, attention to Pali language and to some problems of philosophical interest may jointly be useful in making a conceptual map of part of the early Buddhist terrain, and in a vigilance as regards applicable internal and external criticisms.

Having argued against considerations of methodological, logical, and emotive points (in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 respectively) which seek to cut off further inquiry by asserting that early Buddhism is unintelligible or perversely pessimistic, the next three chapters discuss mind. In Ch. 4 a discussion of the terms citta, mano and viññāna is given in I, and in II the problem of the compatibility of 'no soul' (anatta) doctrine and rebirth, and the problem of reidentification of persons is discussed.

The conclusion in outline is that although internal and external understanding are not mutually exclusive (Ch. 1) and early Buddhism is neither logically (Ch. 2) nor emotively (Ch. 3) flawed as unintelligible, there is a problem with the reidentification of the person on its view of rebirth (Ch. 4). This problem cannot be dispelled by appeal to the Buddhist empiricism thesis, according to which one can 'see' rebirth (Ch. 5). But in rejecting the Buddhist empiricism thesis it is not being suggested that parinibbāna is a 'transcendent state', for it may be understood as 'eternal life' rather than 'endless life' when amata is predicated of nibbāna as the limit (parinibbāna), in a way which does not conflict with anatta doctrine (Ch. 6).

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Introduction

This is a study of the Buddhism of the five Nikāyas.¹ For convenience the term 'early Buddhism' is used here as a shorthand for 'the Buddhism of the five Nikāyas', but in so doing it is not being suggested that all parts of the five Nikāyas, written in Pali, are of the same chronological stratum. Scholars concerned with chronology may find reason to believe that even in the same collection or Nikāya there are passages comparatively later than the majority in the collection. The possibility of interpolations creeping in cannot be credibly ruled out by asserting dogmatically that the five Nikāyas are the very words of Gotama Buddha.

Nevertheless the Nikāya literature is clearly primary source material for the study of Buddhism, and is often appealed to by proponents of sects which have introduced other and later texts. There are various ways of studying Buddhism, both in terms of demarcating which texts to study, and in terms of the discipline primarily used to elucidate them (e. g., sociology, philosophy). I make no claim that my procedure is the best or only valid one with which to study Buddhism, but only want to make my particular bias and interest clear at the outset. Agehananda Bharati once remarked on the separation of orientalists and philosophers:²

It is extremely difficult to make them meet, because a lot of cross-disciplinary studies are needed for both -- the philosophers will have to read some original tracts of Indian thought in other Asian languages; and the orientalists will have to acquire some knowledge of contemporary philosophy, especially on the terminological side.

Not wishing to be classified exclusively in either camp my hope is that this work succeeds in getting philosophers and orientalists talking to each other more, counter-acting the narrow-minded prejudice that exists in some quarters on both sides, that

they have nothing to say to one another. In my view the study of Asian thought is both accurate and non-trivial to the extent that it is both textual and philosophical. Yet this does not mean that the texts have to be strait-jacketed into a pre-conceived philosophical framework. An example of this is to be found in Conze's treatment of dhamma in a dialectical manner.³ The trouble is, if one begins with a pre-conceived philosophical view into which it would be nice if the texts fit, the likelihood is strong that one will end by representing the texts as if they were amenable to an alien mold, or of making baseless assertions.

In this century there has been a movement away from a judgmental Christo-centric point of view in the academic study of religion toward a more descriptive, less obviously biased view. Yet in Pali Buddhist scholarship there remain apologetical strands, with proponents of, say, empiricism, ecumenism, and even Wittgenstein's thought, offering various interpretive filters through which to see Buddhism.⁴ Although I think that some knowledge of contemporary philosophy is an asset in studying Buddhism, it is not useful in any wholesale way by the imposition of a type of thought as a mold to be set on the Buddhist texts. Philosophical sensitivity may be useful in making a conceptual map of part of the early Buddhist terrain, and in a vigilance as regards both internal and external criticisms which apply to Buddhism. As orientalist so rightly insist, attention to the language (in this case, Pali) is essential. Having said this I hope that no one will perversely insist that I regard any particular philosopher as an avatāra of the Buddha Gotama. The intent is to turn away from apologetics as an over-all strategy and back to description with some critical notice, taking understanding as the basic task.

Where occasionally comparisons are made between what the early Buddhist texts say and what philosophy of religion works say,

the comparisons are not regarded as valuable somehow in their own right, nor as causal influence accounts, nor as concealed apologetics to make Buddhism seem respectable (for the view taken is that it is respectable), but only for the sake of understanding. If it should turn out that there is some clarity in the Buddhist vision (along with some difficulties), this should not be surprising, nor taken as evidence of apologetic intent. Hence, if the philosophy of religion can on some points aid understanding without doing violence to the texts, the absence of exact Pali equivalents to its distinctions (say, between endless and eternal life as two views of immortality -- Ch. 6) will be acceptable as a matter of course.

An underlying assumption of this study is the view that differences between religions are at least as important as similarities. At a sufficiently lofty level of generality various things may be said to be similar. But what one needs to keep in mind is: what is the point in so saying? Ninian Smart's blistering attack on the 'thesis of religious unity' does seem to me clearly on the right track.⁵ By contrast, philosophers and religionists have often stressed the importance of unity. F. S. C. Northrop, in The Meeting of East and West, holds that philosophical systems have been outmoded by science and that what is needed is a scientifically grounded philosophy unifying the world. And more recently John Hick, in Many Faces of God, offers a thin-line theism as the solution to the problem of unity in the face of religious pluralism. Rather than taking these sorts of approach, the diversity among and competition between different religions might be seen as a sign of great human vitality, rather than as something to be homogenized under the respective rubrics of positivism and of theism.

Accordingly, if the differences between religions are instructive, a contextual study (here the context is a set of texts) is in

order. This does not rule out the possibility of criticism, however, as Ch. 1 argues. And a contextual approach may bring to light what, for some, are surprising possibilities of religion. That, e. g., there is a religion which does not accept the concept of a Creator God (Pali: Issara) may indeed surprise those accustomed to define religion as belief in God or as man's response to the transcendent. Nibbāna is neither the God of Greek or of Biblical tradition, as Ch. 4 explains. And it would be folly to suggest that early Buddhism is not a religion at all. For it is neither philosophy in the sense of argument and counter-argument (the 'wordy warfare' rejected by the Buddhists), nor some sort of science or magic, and it plays a structurally analogous role in the lives of believers ~~to~~ what we should call religion in the West.

I have said that our basic concern is understanding. From this view it is neither necessary nor helpful to assume that early Buddhism is either superior or inferior to the later developments in Buddhist tradition. It is as unfounded to assume that the mere fact of the Nikāya literature being earlier than other Buddhist works makes them 'more true' as it is to assume that 'truth is an unfolding development' so that (via reductio ad absurdum) the latest Buddhist trend would have the current, but not the final, word. With the eye of an historian, B. C. Law observes that early Buddhism provides:⁶

germs of a philosophical system which came to be more logically and consistently systematized later on.

Taken as the historical point that there is indeed continuity and development in the Buddhist tradition, this is surely right. But what is not correct is the suggestion that early Buddhism is less logical and less consistent than later developments. This would require a detailed demonstration, but it is not clear how it could be shown. For the early texts and, for example, the

Abhidhamma texts are not on the same level, and hence comparison in terms of logic and consistency (characteristics generally ascribed more to the latter) amount to stacking the deck in the following way. It is rather like comparing the Bible with the Summa Theologica, and then dismissing the former as less logical and consistent.⁷

The view that the early Buddhist texts are insufficient by themselves and must be supplemented by studies of the commentator, Buddhaghosa, has particular appeal in some circles, and seems to be based on the sort of mistaken view held by Law according to which the early Buddhist texts are unsystematic ramblings, in need of being 'systematized' (i. e. of becoming a different kind of text). The assumption that the texts are insufficient without the commentaries emerges, for example, in a review of A. K. Warder's Indian Buddhism in which Alex Wayman writes:⁸

My own position is that a restriction to either one of the two sides (the scriptures and the commentaries) is structurally convenient for writing a book and not for solving problems: to solve problems one must include all the possible evidence and therefore cannot restrict himself to the scriptures or to the commentaries exclusively.

Just reading the commentaries would, indeed, be peculiar, since they presuppose knowledge of the texts to which they refer. (It is not clear that anyone actually does this, but I leave that point aside.) The converse, however, is not true. For reading early Buddhism without the commentaries enables one to gain an understanding which would not be possible if the commentaries are taken into account. Of course it is possible, alternatively, to gain an understanding of Buddhism by taking both the early Buddhist texts and the commentaries into account. One may take the former sort of understanding as valuable without saying that no one should attempt the latter. Whether, therefore, it is a 'restriction' to keep to the early texts and not take into account

the commentaries, depends on what kind of understanding is sought for, on what one takes as the problem to be solved. I think that an important kind of understanding about Buddhism is to see what can be said about the Nikāya view on topics concerning rationality and mind. If this is the problem that one starts with, then not considering the commentaries is certainly not a restriction, but a methodological necessity.

But setting the problem in this way, is what the historical Gotama Buddha actually taught uncovered? It would be naive to rule out the possibility of interpolations having changed the record after all these centuries. From the view point of critical scholarship all one can claim is to be studying a set of very early texts.

Even from a Buddhist viewpoint, however, the historicity of Gotama in particular does not matter much. For the Buddhist path or doctrine does not depend on the historicity of Gotama in the way that Christianity depends on the historicity of Jesus and on his resurrection. Buddhism 'depends on' Gotama in the sense that he is viewed as the turner of the wheel of doctrine in the present eon. But Gotama is not viewed as the first such Buddha, nor the last. He is considered as a torch-bearer, not an initiator, and the path or doctrine is viable or obtains regardless of whether a Tathāgata appears in a particular age to illuminate it.

Thus, the path or doctrine does not 'depend on' Gotama in the sense that if he had not become a Buddha (in this eon 'the Buddha') one could not possibly achieve the highest goal of Buddhist life. Granted that it would be very much more difficult without such a Buddha to show the way, yet the way is in principle discoverable by anyone. By contrast, whether as a matter of fact or as a matter of definition of 'Christian', the vast majority of Christians hold that if Jesus were not the Christ and had not redeemed

mankind, one could not achieve Christian salvation. The result is that even if someone were to provide new, cogent evidence to show that Gotama did not exist as a historical person at all, such a demonstration would not affect the validity of the path or doctrine at all.

Jesus' existence is logically a pre-condition for his undergoing a resurrection, as Gotama's existence is logically a pre-condition for his becoming a Buddha. Yet whereas if it could be shown that the Biblical Jesus did not exist Christianity would be undermined, if it could be shown that Gotama did not exist, Buddhism would not be undermined. So it is not the historicity i. e., the existence of Gotama, which supports Buddhism, unlike the situation with Christianity.

It should not however be overlooked that it might make some difference in practice to the tenacity with which Buddhists hold their faith, if it could be shown that although Gotama existed, he was an unenlightened charlatan either in reference to his expressed view of enlightenment or according to some supposedly more developed view of what counts as enlightenment (not fully enlightened). In this respect Buddhism is analogous to the Christian situation, in which Jesus must be seen as the Christ, if the religion is going to be viable. Yet there is this difference: that in these cases one is not concerned specifically with the existence, the historicity, of the religious leaders.

For the record, I see no convincing reasons for denying the historicity of Gotama. But as the study concerns a set of texts which would be regarded as Buddhist even if it turned out that there never existed a Gotama, the understanding which this study offers is not contingent on the existence of a particular person.

The overall aim in terms of methodology and content is, in terms of methodology, to eliminate several obstacles which some

scholars have thought made an understanding of the content impossible, and in terms of content, to develop an understanding of rationality and mind in early Buddhism. In selecting specific topics to cover within this scope I have had to be somewhat selective, as there are many topics which could be considered under the rubrics of rationality and mind. Throughout, I develop the overall argument in such a way as to interest both philosophers and Buddhologists, and it is this approach, just as much as particular conclusions, which marks whatever originality the work may lay claim to. Although there have been other works on the 'psychology' of Pali Buddhism, there are very few written by scholars with philosophical training.

This type of work on the interface between the philosophy of religion and Buddhology is a new possibility for religious studies. There has long been critically-oriented writing concerning conceptual difficulties in Christianity, and while the study of Oriental thought was in its infancy in the West, it was important that some scholars took an apologetical stand on behalf of Asian religions in order to stimulate interest in the subject and in order to jolt some out of a Christo-centric complacency. But that time is past. Every year one is inundated with popular books on Asian thought which recapitulate well-worn doctrines in non-technical language with varying degrees of inaccuracy. There is a need for scholars to do for Buddhism and other religions what philosophers of religion have been doing for Christianity in presenting conceptual problems. What is needed is, on the one hand, sympathetic understanding of what is internally coherent and linguistically precise in the language of the Asian texts studied, and, on the other hand, attention to Asian thought from a critical philosophical point of view. The former alone leads to a relativistic ostrich attitude; the latter alone leads to arrogant misunderstanding. But it is not that philosophy

has only an external, critical function here. It may function in this way (e.g, a difficulty in reidentification of persons is shown), and yet also philosophy may be useful for internal understanding (e.g., the endless life/eternal life distinction is shown applicable) in a way which does not distort but elucidates.

It is important to distinguish the approach of the present work from comparative philosophy. Generally (but not, I think, necessarily),⁹ comparative philosophy tends toward either apologetics or condescension with reference to one of the things compared. While these attitudes do not in every case preclude understanding, if held at the outset, they can take the form of a one-sided selectivity towards the facts which makes understanding difficult or impossible. Comparisons are useful when they enable one to see the subject in a fresh way, without distorting it.¹⁰ Comparisons are occasionally made here, but there is no overall strategy of a comparative sort.¹¹

Chapter 1 takes up some methodological problems on the possibilities of internal and external criticism. The main thrust here is to show that the strong thesis (incorrectly attributed to Winch) that standards of rationality never coincide is mistaken. The importance of showing that it is mistaken is that if it were not, then an understanding of early Buddhism could not even begin from a Western viewpoint.

Even with this general objection to the possibility of understanding aside, some have thought that in the particular case of early Buddhism the four-fold logic that it sometimes employs is self-contradictory or else unintelligible. If this were so, it would be impossible to begin understanding early Buddhism at all from a Western viewpoint. Ch. 2 examines the four-fold logic and concludes that it is not self-contradictory or senseless, explaining that it is not a specifically formal logical principle

but an heuristic one for debate.

Ch. 3 answers the objection that early Buddhism is emotively flawed as Ch. 2 had done for the charge that it is logically flawed. It does so by examining the concept of dukkha, which turns out to be a descriptive-cum-evaluative concept and one which provides no support for a view of early Buddhism as 'pessimistic'.

Having argued against considerations of methodological, logical and emotive points (in Chs. 1, 2 and 3 respectively) which seek to cut off further inquiry by asserting that early Buddhism is unintelligible or perversely pessimistic, the next three chapters discuss mind. In Ch. 4 a discussion of the terms citta, mano and viññāna is given in I, and in II the problem of the compatibility of 'no soul' (anatta) doctrine and rebirth, and the problem of reidentification of persons is discussed.

In Ch. 5 the concern is with talk about verification in relation to the early Buddhist rebirth doctrine. Part I discusses saddhā (confidence) and II sees abhiññā (special sorts of knowledge and powers) in the light of the importance of saddhā. On the basis of I and II the Buddhist empiricism thesis is rejected in III.

In Ch. 6 the deathless (amata) is explained in such a way as not to conflict with anatta doctrine. Views of nibbāna are discussed, the distinction between parinibbāna and nibbāna defended, and parinibbāna explained in terms of 'eternal life' but not 'endless life'.

Notes: Introduction

¹Dīgha, Majjhima, Anguttara, Saṃyutta, Khuddaka - Nikāyas.

²Agehananda Bharati, The Tantric Tradition (London, Rider & Co., 1965), p. 13.

³For details see my review of E. Conze, A Short History of Buddhism in Religious Studies (copyright 1980 C. U. P., forthcoming).

⁴Examples of these sorts of advocacy may be found in K. N. Jayatilleke, Lyn DeSilva, and Chris Gudmunsen respectively.

⁵Ninian Smart, The Yogi and the Devotee, London, Allen and Unwin, 1968.

⁶B. C. Law, History of Pāli Literature vol. I (London, 1933), p. 239.

⁷These two are not being compared with respect to authoritativeness, so there is no assumption here that early Buddhism is authoritative and other strands of Buddhism 'heretical'.

⁸Alex Wayman, review of A. K. Warder, Indian Buddhism in Journal of Indian Philosophy 6, 1978, pp. 415-427.

⁹In his monograph, Comparative Aesthetics (University of Hawaii Press), Eliot Deutsch provides three examples of comparative philosophy with reference in each case to shared problems in two different traditions. This is a glimmer of light in the darkness, considering what sometimes counts as 'comparative philosophy'. On the methodological side, however, more needs to be said about whether and how one can identify 'the same problem' in two different traditions.

¹⁰For examples of such distortion see St. Elmo Nauman, A Dictionary of Asian Philosophy, and my review which points to some of them (Religious Studies, forthcoming).

¹¹Elsewhere (Middle Way, 1976, p. 119) I have made some comparative remarks but qualify them in order to avoid distortion.

Chapter 1: Rationality and Cultural Understanding

I

Alasdair MacIntyre, in an article highly critical of Peter Winch's views, observes that both Durkheim and Winch suppose an either/or dichotomy between the contextual study of another society and the external study of it:¹

That is, Durkheim supposes, just as Winch does, that an investigation of social reality which uses the concepts available to the members of the society being studied, and an investigation of social reality which utilizes concepts not so available and invokes causal explanations of which the agents themselves are not aware, are mutually exclusive alternatives. But Durkheim supposes, as Winch does not, that the latter alternative is the one to be preferred. Yet his acceptance of the same dichotomy involves him in the same inability to understand the different ways in which social structure may be related to individual action.

And in the following passage Winch does draw a sharp distinction between 'another way of life' and our own, so that they are mutually exclusive:²

Seriously to study another way of life is necessarily to seek to extend our own — not simply to bring the other way within the already existing boundaries of our own, because the point about the latter in their present form is that they ex hypothesi exclude the other.

It might seem that Winch wishes to make a sharp cleavage between conceptual schemes so that on this basis he could maintain that it cannot sensibly be asked whether the Azande belief that witches exist is true or false, since appealing to criteria in our scientific world-view would then be an illegitimate move, and since there are no criteria independent of all ways of life to which to appeal. The inadequacy of this caricature of Winch's intentions will be shown in II.

First of all it is interesting to notice that Winch sometimes speaks, in the same paper, as though ways of life must exclude one another, because the 'boundaries of our own...in their

present form... ex hypothesi exclude the other', and sometimes rather differently as in: 'For we start from the position that standards of rationality in different societies do not always coincide...'.³ And it is obvious that to say that they do not always coincide is to leave open the possibility that they might sometimes coincide. But if MacIntyre were right in interpreting Winch as intending to drive a wedge between cultures in such a way that the contextual study of another culture and the external study of it turn out to be mutually exclusive, then it is precisely this possibility which must be excluded.

Now I would like to examine the basis given for the claim that one cannot sensibly say whether Azande belief in witches is true or false. Winch's argument apparently depends on his driving a wedge between cultures in such a way as to exclude overlap. It can be argued, however, that once driven, it becomes impossible to explain progress in science, for example, nor is it possible to give any good reasons for changing from a given scientific conceptual scheme to a more efficient and economical one. For instance, on Winch's view Ptolemaic astronomy might be regarded as impervious to criticism, as the following transposition of Winch's parody of Evans-Pritchard shows:⁴

Copernicans observe the rising of the sun just as Ptolemaics observe it, but Copernican observations are always subordinated to their beliefs and are incorporated into their beliefs and made to explain them and justify them. Let a Ptolemaic consider any argument that would utterly refute all Copernican scepticism about the rising of the sun as it moves around the earth. If it were translated into Ptolemaic modes of thought it would serve to support their entire structure of belief. For their Ptolemaic notions are eminently coherent, being interrelated by a network of logical ties, and are so ordered that they never too crudely contradict Copernican experience but, instead, experience seems to justify them. The Copernican is immersed in a sea of Copernican notions, and if he speaks about the Ptolemaic rising sun he must speak in a Copernican idiom.

Concisely stated in Winch's vein, the context from which the objection is raised is not Ptolemy's, Ptolemaic astronomy is not quasi-Copernican, and to insist on the being a superfluity of epicycles is a category mistake.⁵ On the view caricatured there can be no progress in science. But there is progress in science. Therefore the view caricatured is mistaken.

Winch could point out, plausibly, that he intended a contrast between scientific and non-scientific ones, not between two scientific conceptual schemes. The difficulty is that he maintains that there is no universal set of norms of rationality, without giving any reason why Ptolemaic rationality, say, can be dismissed. Further, if it turned out that a remote tribe of geocentrically inclined Ptolemaic primitives were discovered tomorrow, then on MacIntyre's interpretation of Winch their astronomy would be impervious to criticism.

A question arises as to just what Winch had in mind about the relationship between two cultures with respect to standards of rationality. It seems that he needs to hold the strong thesis that standards of rationality in two cultures never coincide, in order to drive a wedge between cultures in such a way as to support his other claim that contextual study of another culture and external study of it are mutually exclusive. However, if he consistently holds the strong thesis, then a problem arises in making sense of his talk about culture learning. For Winch, an important part of culture learning in the sense of learning from another culture consists in learning different ways of making sense of human life as a whole, as the following quotation bears out:⁶

What we may learn by studying other cultures are not merely possibilities of different ways of doing things, other techniques. More importantly we may learn different possibilities of making sense of human life, different ideas about the possible importance that the carrying out of certain activities may take on for a man, trying to contemplate the sense of his life as a whole. This dimension of the matter is precisely what MacIntyre misses in his treatment of Zande magic: he can see in it only a (misguided) technique for producing consumer goods.

Here Winch is on the right track, both in his characterization of the importance of learning from another culture, and in his criticism of MacIntyre insofar as the latter regards Azande magic as pseudo-science.

Unfortunately, however, when one considers Winch's idea of culture learning in relation to the strong thesis outlined above, it is not at all clear whether and how it is possible to learn from another culture. For if person x in culture A tries to learn about culture B, and if the standards of rationality in A and B are entirely different admitting of no overlap (as the strong thesis states), then x in A cannot understand B at all. The most he could do, it seems, is to report the behavior of some members of B and re-state any views of member-informants of B. But if the standards of rationality were entirely different, then he could not see the 'logic' of B at all. It is rather like the case of visual perception in which one sees a sequence of marks but not the pattern. Winch, however, emphasizes that the concept of learning from another culture is closely linked to the concept of wisdom.⁷

As a matter of fact one can learn to understand the rationality of another culture, and one can see a pattern rather than just a sequence of marks when shown by someone capable of tracing the pattern. But rationality is a fundamental concept in comparison to bits of data which are seen as rational, so that learning the former is unlike learning a particular bit of data. As Winch says of rationality:⁸

It is a concept necessary to the existence of any language: to say of a society that it has a language is also to say that it has a concept of rationality. There need not perhaps be any word functioning in its language as 'rational' does in ours, but at least there must be features of its members' use of language analogous to those features of our use of language which are connected with our use of the word 'rational'. Where there is language it must make a difference what is said and this is only possible where the saying of one thing rules out, on pain of failure to communicate, the saying of something else.

Just what sort of mistake is a mistake in rationality? Is it the same as making a mistake about the denotation of a word, say, thinking that 'chartreuse' means 'red'? Clearly not. Since rationality is not something one might find or not find in a language but is essential for communication, a mistake at this level is fundamental. While many mistakes in denotation can be corrected by ostensive definition, as when one points to a chartreuse drapery and says 'this is chartreuse' to someone who made the above-mentioned error, rationality cannot be taught ostensively nor a mistake in it corrected ostensively. Like definition of words, it is learned in the process of socialization or acculturation, yet not in precisely the same way as in learning the meanings of individual words.

The following dilemma arises, however, in that if Winch were to hold the strong thesis that standards of rationality in two cultures never coincide as a basis for his claim that contextual study and external study are mutually exclusive, then learning from another culture would become inexplicable (see paraphrase, p. 16). On the other hand, if he were to adhere only to the weaker claim that standards of rationality in different cultures do not always coincide, leaving open the possibility that they might sometimes do so, then there is no basis for the claim that contextual study and external study of another culture are mutually exclusive (see quotation, p. 14).

The main point that I wish to emphasize as emerging from the foregoing discussion, and one which is germane to the entire project here, is this: that one has been given no reason to believe that standards of rationality in two different cultures must exclude one another, and that, even if this were demonstrated, it would have proven too much in that learning from another culture would consequently be inexplicable.

MacIntyre raises these criticisms of Winch:⁹

The first is to the effect that in Winch's view certain actual historical transitions from one system of beliefs to another which are necessarily characterized by raising questions of the kind that Winch rejects. In seventeenth-century Scotland, for example, the question could not but be raised, "But are there witches?" When Winch asks, from within what way of social life, under what system of belief was this question asked, the only answer is that it was asked by men who confronted alternative systems and were able to draw out of what confronted them independent criteria of judgment. Many Africans today are in the same situation.

This may be misleading. Perhaps MacIntyre would agree that it is not a matter of drawing out criteria which are in some sense already there, a suggestion so vague as to be absurd, but his language suggests otherwise. Here one has, on the contrary, an evaluational decision process in which one first decides what criteria are important, and then looks to see whether the desired criteria are better met in one case than in the other, or whether some sort of new system is required. In short, while MacIntyre complains that on Winch's view certain historical transitions from one conceptual scheme to another are made unintelligible, it is not clear that on his own account they are in fact intelligible.

The basic problem is that of the meaning of 'independent' in MacIntyre's usage of 'independent criteria' here. He supposes that deciding for or against a conceptual scheme in which witchcraft plays a role may be done with reference to independent criteria. But it may be asked: 'independent of what?'. Since MacIntyre holds that 'all interpretation has to begin with detecting the standards of intelligibility established in a society', he could only see himself as speaking from his own point of view as a member of a society in which the twentieth-century scientific world-view predominates.¹⁰ And so, too, with the hypothetical Scotsman who, in seventeenth-century context, asks whether or not there are witches. The criteria appealed to cannot be of some curious

neutral context-free sort, as MacIntyre himself notes, so perhaps what he means is 'independent' in the sense of being derived on one's own, through reflection. In that case his thinking turns out to have a decidedly a priori slant, which is in fact the subject of Winch's attack. MacIntyre does not put much weight on this argument, adding that 'any historical counter-example to Winch's thesis will be open to questions of interpretation that will make it less than decisive.'¹¹

A second argument advanced by MacIntyre, based on considerations of meaning and the possibility of translation, runs as follows:¹²

Consider the statement made by some Zande theorist or by King James VI and I, "There are witches" and the statement made by some modern skeptic, "There are no witches." Unless one of these statements denies what the other asserts, the negation of the sentence expressing the former could not be a correct translation of the sentence expressing the latter. Thus if we could not deny from our own standpoint and in our own language what the Azande or King James assert in theirs, we should be unable to translate their expression into our language. Cultural idiosyncrasy would have entailed linguistic idiosyncrasy and cross-cultural comparison would have been rendered logically impossible. But of course translation is not impossible.

In order to probe this argument further, let us ask: if an Azande asserts something which is translated as 'There are witches', and if King James VI asserts 'There are witches', are the Azande and King James VI making the same claim? The answer to this depends on what amount of detail is taken to figure in the denotation of 'witch' and its counterpart in Azande language. If it is assumed that a characterization of these terms is possible in a minimal fashion which does not make idiosyncratic reference to features of the conceptual schemes in which they differently function, then MacIntyre can make good his point

that the fact of translation shows that conceptual schemes are not always mutually exclusive. Consequently, on this minimal characterization of the denotation, the Azande and King James VI could be said to be making the same claim. On the other hand, if the characterization is filled out in such a way as to refer to some related concept which is used in the one conceptual scheme and not used in the other, then the two could not be said to be making the same claim. Thus, on one line of thinking, the conceptual similarity is stressed; on the other, their contextual uniqueness - is emphasized.

Yet insofar as MacIntyre's view requires a minimal characterisation of 'witch', e.g., what counts as the same claim on such a characterisation is likely to be rather different from what both the Azande and King James VI would take to be the issue if pressed to clarify their statements. Whereas the latter might say, for example, that a witch is the sort of being which can occasionally be seen riding a broomstick under a full moon at night, the notion of riding a broomstick might be entirely irrelevant for the Azande's attempt to clarify what he means by saying that there are witches.

The upshot of this is that although, on the sort of view required by MacIntyre's argument, one could make a case for saying that the two are making 'the same claim', this would not be very interesting once one sees that neither of the two would agree that the lofty level of generality at which such a view must characterize the sameness is precisely the issue. And if the same claim is not under consideration, then it is just as impossible for the two to disagree in contradictory fashion as it is for them to agree. MacIntyre's second argument, therefore, does not turn out to be of much help in the way that he intended, although the above considerations prompted by it can serve as a warning against careless

delin ion of the same claim or of the same problem in comparative work.

It is curious that he does not notice that the argument is of little help, for just after giving it he states, speaking of Goldschmidt and Leach:¹³

Both have also pointed out how, if we compare for example marital institutions in different cultures, our definition of "marriage" will either be drawn from one culture in terms of whose concepts other cultures will be described or rather misdescribed, or else will be so neutral, bare, and empty as to be valueless. That is, the understanding of a people in terms of their own concepts and beliefs does in fact tend to preclude understanding them in any other terms. To this extent Winch is vindicated.

The first sentence quoted above is an apt statement of some consequences which follow from MacIntyre's own argument concerning translatability. For he holds that, of the two claims, 'there are witches' and 'there are no witches' (in the contexts specified), one must deny what the other asserts or else translation would be impossible, which consequence is contrary to fact. Yet here above, using the example of 'marriage' rather than of 'witch', he implies the opposite, namely, that people in different cultures are not asserting or denying the same thing in talking about marriage.

It is important to see that the example of the concept of marriage is not tantamount to the general point made after 'that is'; that acceptance of the former in no way entails acceptance of the latter. Indeed, the relationship between the former and the latter is entirely unclear. Since it cannot be an equivalence relationship, it might be thought to be an entailment relationship. But to arrive at this general view of the mutual exclusivity of contextual and external types of cultural understanding on the basis of the example given requires a great leap, and one can only suspect that MacIntyre was convinced of the truth of the

general claim by attending to many more examples of this sort. But the reader is not obliged to follow him in this, because an inductive argument of however many examples of the requisite sort can never ensure that, in the next instance, a specific concept cannot be understood both in its context and in relation to a concept of another system.

The usage of 'in fact' is also puzzling. Its inclusion seems to mean that as a matter of fact it turns out to be the case that the contextual understanding and external understanding are mutually exclusive. But insofar as this position is pressed into service as a recommendation for what should be done in future study of other conceptual schemes or cultures, it has no force whatsoever on account of the contingent status of the position. Of course he might mean 'in fact' in the sense of 'actually so' in reference to the general position rather than in the sense of 'contingently so' in reference to the particular example, but in that case support is entirely lacking for the general position anyway. Thus, MacIntyre's claim as to how Winch is 'vindicated' is mistaken.

In this study of early Buddhism I am trying to avoid the extremes of: concepts from the outside are the only right vehicles for the analysis of another culture or conceptual scheme (Durkheim), and concepts of another culture or conceptual scheme are the only right vehicles for their understanding (MacIntyre's interpretation of Winch).

II

As is often the case in philosophy, if one now returns to reconsider the starting point, some puzzlement vanishes. Recall that on MacIntyre's interpretation of Winch as holding that contextual study and external study are mutually exclusive there turned out to be a dilemma for Winch (p. 18).

In The Idea of a Social Science Winch writes:¹⁴

I do not wish to maintain that we must stop at the unreflective kind of understanding of which I gave as an instance the engineer's understanding of the activities of his colleagues. But I do want to say that any more reflective understanding must necessarily presuppose, if it is to count as genuine understanding at all, the participant's unreflective understanding. And this in itself makes it misleading to compare it with the natural scientist's understanding of his scientific data. Similarly, although the reflective student of society, or of a particular mode of social life, may find it necessary to use concepts which are not taken from the forms of activity which he is investigating, but which are taken rather from the context of his own investigation, still these technical concepts of his will imply a previous understanding of those other concepts which belong to the activities under investigation.

If one interprets Winch's position in the light of the above passage, rather than just focusing on his article 'Understanding a Primitive Society', it becomes clear that he has covered himself against MacIntyre's interpretation of the (subsequent) article. It is not necessary to stop at the contextual level, Winch holds, and contextual understanding and external understanding are not mutually exclusive.

That he does not intend to hold the strong thesis also comes out in replies to criticism. In Ethics and Action Winch says:¹⁵

In view of various criticisms which have been made of this essay since it was first published, I ought perhaps to emphasize that its argument is not, absurdly, that ways in which men live together can never be characterized as in any sense 'irrational'; still less do I argue in it that men who belong to one culture can 'never understand' lives led in another culture. The argument is rather against certain kinds of account of the criticisms which are possible and of what is involved in such 'cross-cultural' attempts at understanding.

And in Reason and Religion, while admitting that he may not have always been careful enough in phrasing his view, it is not that there are 'practices and beliefs hermetically sealed off from any

relation to life or to our understanding of the world', and not that there is (or should be) a 'sealing the door between the chapel and the laboratory to make sure there is no intermingling of the incense and the hydrogen sulphide', and that clearly:¹⁶

My point, however, is not that there cannot or should not be any confrontation between a man's religious convictions and the understanding of the world which he has drawn from sources other than religion. I am saying rather that the form such a 'confrontation with reality' takes is very misleadingly represented in terms of 'evidence for God's existence and non-existence'.

That he does not intend to hold the strong thesis also comes out in reply to I. C. Jarvie, who has said:¹⁷

I therefore wish to argue that Winch yields too much to relativism, that there are language-games in which cross-cultural value judgments are legitimate moves, that these moves are played in all cultures as well as in the sociologists' sub-culture. Indeed, such cross-cultural value-judgments, such use of one's own society as a measuring instrument or a sounding board, is the principal way sociological understanding of an alien society is reached.

Winch thinks that the last statement is obvious and beside the point, that of course we use our society as a measuring rod, but that the question is not whether we can do this, but what sort of comparison is involved. He suggests that it is not cross-cultural comparison as such that is wrongheaded, but only such as would involve a category-mistake. An example of this sort of mistake would be to compare Azande magic with some sort of Western scientific framework and conclude that the Azande beliefs are false and those of science true. My concern is to argue against the strong thesis, and to eliminate the illusion that it has Winch as a supporter.

Explicit denial of what I have called the strong thesis comes early on in Winch's rejoinder to Jarvie, where he points out that Jarvie's attempt at paraphrase viz., 'standards of rationality are

incomparable', does not at all paraphrase the author's view.¹⁸ Instead, Winch was thinking that it is sometimes the case, but not always. For he does want to hold that it is possible to learn from another culture, and this would be impossible if there were no points of intersection of standards of rationality.

Jarvie interprets Winch's overall enterprise as making a tacit distinction between the broad understanding of a culture and of primitive customs in general, on the one hand, and a narrow understanding of a culture and those customs involving ideas which conflict with our ideas, on the other hand. Having made this distinction, while recognizing that Winch has not 'explicitly' done so, he then asserts that Winch holds implicitly that if we can understand the second way, then we can in the first way as well. Jarvie observes that this is not obviously true. I do not wish to argue that it is true, but merely to point out that he has offered no evidence for this interpretation of Winch, nor does it seem a plausible interpretation. Thus, one can only regard the broad/narrow distinction here as a contrived one which fails to fit the case. It is significant that Jarvie does not try to push this line. It serves only as a red herring attempt to draw attention away from the real issue underlying Winch's discussion, which is the inapplicability of positivist ways of thinking to the description of religious and magical practices. In all fairness to Winch it should be recognized that he is not concerned to make some facile leap from the particular (narrow understanding) to the general (broad understanding) based on a consideration of Azande magic. On his view, understanding a primitive society does not consist in this sort of generalizing at all, but in part, at least, consists in seeing significant differences (between magic and science, say), and avoiding making certain kinds of mistakes (taking magic to be low-grade science, for example).

Point (i) which Jarvie makes against Winch is that he denies standards to societies which they in fact possess. In the discussion of (i) he makes it clear that he means that Winch denies that the Azande have a standard of rationality recognizable in the West. That the Azande try to deal with contradictions via the introduction of ad hoc hypotheses makes it clear, Jarvie, argues, that they do have a standard of rationality recognizable in the West, one recognizable as poor.¹⁹ Winch replies by criticizing Jarvie for what he calls his "'scientific' preconceptions' as follows:²⁰

Against the background of such preconceptions Zande standards might indeed seem 'rather poor', but whether they really are rather poor or not depends on the point of the activity within which the contradictions crop-up. My claim was that this point is in fact very different from the point of scientific investigations.

But what precisely is the point of the Azande activity? Winch has indicated that it is not scientific investigation, but his positive vision is not spelled out. And just how do we know when, in encountering a practice in another culture, the practice is scientific -- is there a **cr**iterion, and if so, what is it? Winch evinces no concern for these issues. Jarvie interprets the Azande as introducing ad hoc hypotheses, holding without argument that they are engaged in pseudo-scientific practices, while Winch says that the point of their activity is not this without being very specific as to what it is.²¹

Of the other points raised by Jarvie, (ii) refers to a problem of conceptual change, (iii) to essentialist metaphysics, (iv) to the 'seamless web' notion, and (v) to empirical content. On all these topics Jarvie thinks that Winch has gotten into deep waters. The only one of these that differs much from Jarvie's way of capsulizing his main points is (ii), where he initially phrases it in terms of a society's view of itself as being the best possible.

But in the discussion of (ii) he makes it clear that his concern is with allowing for the possibility of conceptual change in a society's self-appraisal.

Under the rubric of (ii) Jarvie argues: 'my claim is that overlap of standards is more important because in overlap may lie the seeds of appraisal and change.'²² Jarvie adds that Winch's model assumes that Zande beliefs are not hypotheses, with the assumption that a culture accepts its own appraisal of its beliefs. But this does not happen in all cases, since a culture can adapt itself to new ideas and implement them in its way of life.

Winch, however, does not wish to deny the possibility of conceptual change in a culture, and writes:²³

...it is a mistake to say that the view I developed about the relation between forms of social life and the standards according to which people act within these forms rules out the possibility of such standards being changed as a result of criticism. Indeed, one of my fundamental lines of argument was that the way in which characteristically human behaviour does involve the possibility of discussion and criticism itself shows the intimate connection between men's actions and the social context of rules and standards within which they perform those actions.

But on the other hand, what of Jarvie's point that Winch works with a model which assumes that the Azande beliefs are not hypotheses? I am not concerned to pursue Jarvie's argument in (ii) paraphrased above in precisely the direction he takes it, for it seems to me that Winch's position at best does not require ruling out conceptual change, contrary to criticisms by Jarvie and by MacIntyre. The kernel of Winch's position is a humanistic critique of a misguided application of positivism to describe religious and magical beliefs.

Has Winch provided any account of the status of Azande beliefs? Talking about Azande 'beliefs' presents a problem, he notes, for it seems to invite the question: are they true or false? This

problem vanishes, he argues, when one sees that it is not always possible to say whether a particular belief is true or false. Here he is treading a tightrope. On the one side of this tightrope yawns the great abyss of relativism; on the other, the craggy pit of objectivism. His assertion, 'what I am suggesting is that the westerner who feels there is no reality in Zande magic...',²⁴ admits by implication that there is reality in Azande magic, but without endorsing Azande beliefs about magic as true or rejecting them as false. This becomes clear in his rejoinder to Jarvie.

Winch sees the crux of the dispute between himself and Jarvie as turning upon 'the relation between such notions as language, reality, truth and consistency', and states: 'I think probably the fundamental point of contention between Jarvie and myself concerns the relation between these methods of getting near the truth and the truth which we thus get nearer.'²⁵ Doubtlessly. And Jarvie does betray a rather naive view of truth as tied to a monolithic core of Western rationality which is happily spreading everywhere. And yet, having avoided the fall into the objectivist pit, can Winch remain equally well-poised in the abyss face of relativism?

Prima facie it looks as if Winch has two lines covering himself against relativism. The validity of one turns upon just what meaning can be given to the claim that there is 'reality' in Azande magic, although truth and falsity cannot be predicated of the Azande beliefs about it. It may well be that in saying there is reality in Azande magic Winch means that there is a point to their activity, that such activity is not devoid of human significance.

This view is supported by what Winch says about prayers which:²⁶

may be regarded from one point of view as freeing the believer from dependence on what he is supplicating for. Prayers cannot play this role if they are regarded as a means of influencing the outcome for in that case the one

who prays is still dependent on the outcome. He frees himself from this by acknowledging his complete dependence on God; and this is totally unlike any dependence on the outcome precisely because God is eternal and the outcome contingent.

I do not say that Azande magical rites are at all like Christian prayers of supplication in the positive attitude to contingencies which they express. What I do suggest is that they are alike in that they do, or may, express an attitude to contingencies; one, that is, which involves recognition that one's life is subject to contingencies, rather than an attempt to control these. To characterize this attitude more specifically one should note how Zande rites emphasize the importance of certain fundamental features of their life which MacIntyre ignores. MacIntyre concentrates implicitly on the relation of the rites to consumption, but of course they are also fundamental to social relations and this seems to be emphasized in Zande notions of witchcraft.

According to this account, then, Azande magic is not at all pseudo-science but something quite different in kind: an acknowledgment of one's dependency on the powers that be and renunciation in the face of adverse contingencies. It is essentially ritual symbolic, rather than scientific, activity, and it expresses an attitude. So that is why truth and falsity are inapplicable here. It is clear that according to this account, then, Azande magic is not at all pseudo-science but something quite different in kind: an acknowledgement of one's dependency on the powers that be and renunciation in the face of adverse contingencies. It is essentially ritual, symbolic, rather than scientific, activity, which expresses an attitude towards contingencies. So that is why truth and falsity are inapplicable here.

Why is the first line one covering Winch against a relativistic interpretation? Because he says that there is 'reality' in Azande magic, whereas he does not say this about Jarvie's position, for example. If he were a relativist, he would agree with Jarvie's view and with any other non-self contradictory one.

It might be thought that Winch offers another line in the closing pages of the same article, avoiding what Jarvie calls the

'relativist precipice' by means of it. Winch writes:²⁷

I have wanted to indicate that forms of these limiting concepts will necessarily be an important feature of any human society and that conceptions of good and evil in human life will necessarily be connected with such concepts. In any attempt to understand the life of another society, therefore, an investigation of the forms taken by such concepts — their role in the life of the society — must always take a central place and provide a basis on which understanding may be built.

I am not concerned to argue about whether the 'limiting concepts', birth, death, and sexual relations, are the three essential limiting concepts, nor about whether there must be such a trinity. But if one sees Winch's remark in context it is clear that he is not addressing the issue of relativism but rather the issue of cultural understanding. A culture's normative view of the importance of, and details concerning, birth, death, and sex are starting points for understanding other societies, and since all known cultures have views about these matters, to understand them is to gain fundamental understanding. Nowhere does Winch specifically say that these show why relativism is inadequate, and it is difficult to see how such an attempt could get off the ground, even if he did mean it as such.

For ethical relativism is quite unaffected by whether any set of concepts you like turns up in any culture you like. Even barring problems of translatability and of how these terms may be changed by their relations to different terms in different contexts, the concepts may be used in judgments making opposite recommendations for human action in two cultures. Thus, nothing about whether or not judgments of morality are possible which apply universally has been decided by pointing to putative universal concepts. Consequently, the first but not the second line covers Winch against a relativistic interpretation.

Now it is time to conclude by giving my response to the controversy between Winch and some of his critics, and to explain

how my methodology for the study of early Buddhism is articulated in relation to the controversy. Some of the controversy concerns magic, but in what follows the concern is specifically with religious belief.

I want to say that some religious belief may involve belief in the causal efficacy of rituals to affect the environment, but that the meaning of the rituals need not consist in this. (The meaning, as Winch rightly sees, is embedded in social practice.) A member of a ritual-practicing tribe (e.g., in a rain dance) may have no concept of efficient causation as this concept is used by Westerners in connection with beliefs about natural events, and yet practice his rituals nevertheless. It would be mistaken to say that he must have the notion of efficient causation that Westerners have, and then say he has got it wrong, unless there is clear evidence that he does in fact have the Western concept of efficient causality in seeing the ritual. While a priori the possibility of a whole tribe being misguided cannot be ruled out, it would be equally gratuitous to assume a priori that the tribe must have the Western concept, and then to criticize them for applying it so stupidly.

The critics are right in wishing to keep open the possibilities of criticism and of social change, although they are not very sensitive interpreters of Winch and take him, wrongly, to reject these values and to hold absurd positions. For his part, Winch has admittedly (on his own admission) not always been careful to avoid the language of 'hermetically sealed contexts', resulting in the dilemma pointed out earlier (p. 18). But his intended target, the misguided application of positivist ways of thinking to religious belief, is well chosen. For one reason, because the possibilities of belief are not exhausted by the categories of empirical

statements and tautologies. For there are also background presuppositions which, as such, require no verification, although when articulated as propositions they may in a different context be treated as empirical propositions. I shall say more about that here shortly, as well as later on in treating 'there is rebirth'.

The positivist, however, sees only the first two categories and has a short way with religious belief. On this view religious beliefs (e. g., 'rebirth occurs') are not tautologies and hence must be empirical statements, since all meaningful statements are one or the other. And since there is no good evidence to accept that rebirth occurs, say, it can only be regarded as false, since all empirical statements are either true or false.

I think that Winch is partly correct in emphasizing that the way in which religious beliefs are held does not depend on empirical evidence. This is so when religious beliefs are treated as part of the background. When a religious belief begins to be doubted, however, it can change status and become treated as in need of experiential justification (and sometimes, as in the case of psychic researchers, empirical justification is sought). It does not matter much whether one wishes to reserve the term 'religious belief' in a prescriptive sense only for cases where it is held unconditionally, as a background presupposition. What is more important is to see that in a descriptive sense of 'religious belief' it covers cases where doubt and struggle are regarded as compatible with there being religious belief, so that in a descriptive sense 'religious belief' is sometimes questioned by one who holds it. Religious belief is not all of a piece and is not always unconditionally held. If it were, there would be very few religious believers indeed.

From I and II it is clear that there is no good reason for believing that contextual study and external study are mutually exclusive; certainly Winch is not a proponent of this view. While it would be a mistake to minimize the value of contextual study, it should also be recognized that absurd beliefs are sometimes held. Thus, there will be no a priori assumption made here to the effect that any difficulties must be explained away by appeal to a 'special logic' of early Buddhism.

Although there is no evidence of interest in formal logic per se in early Buddhism, some have thought that early Buddhism violates the principle of noncontradiction. There is, for example, a passage in the Majjhima Nikāya in which Gotama Buddha is confronted with four possibilities: that the tathāgata ('liberated one') exists after death, does not exist after death, both of these, and neither of these. And it might be thought that the third possibility was regarded as a well-formed proposition which denies the principle of noncontradiction. In early Buddhism this tetralemma occurs in the context of the 'unanswered questions' (abyākata pañhā) which are schematized as follows:²⁸

- (1) sassato loko, 'the world is eternal'
- (2) asassato loko, 'the world is not eternal'
- (3) antavā loko, 'the world is finite'
- (4) anantavā loko, 'the world is infinite'
- (5) taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ, 'the soul is identical with the body'
- (6) aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ, 'the soul is different from the body'
- (7) hoti tathāgato param maraṇā, 'the liberated one exists after death'
- (8) na hoti tathāgato param maraṇā, 'the liberated one does not exist after death'
- (9) hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato param maraṇā, 'the liberated one does and does not exist after death'
- (10) neva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param maraṇā, 'the liberated one neither exists nor does not exist after death'

It is the task of the next chapter to examine the question of the rationality of early Buddhism with reference to the tetralemma.

Notes: Chapter 1

¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, Against the Self-Images of the Age (London, Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 220.

² Peter Winch, Ethics and Action (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 33.

³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴ Ibid., cp. p. 21.

⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

⁹ MacIntyre, op. cit., p. 228.

¹⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Is Understanding Religion Compatible with Believing?' in John Hick, Faith and the Philosophers (London, Macmillan, 1964), p. 126.

¹¹ MacIntyre, op. cit. (1971), p. 228.

¹² Ibid., p. 228.

¹³ Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁴ Peter Winch, 'The Idea of a Social Science' in Bryan R. Wilson, Rationality (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1977), p. 5.

¹⁵ Peter Winch, Ethics and Action (London, 1972), p. 3.

¹⁶ Peter Winch, 'Meaning and Religious Language' in S. C. Brown, Reason and Religion (Ithaca and London, 1977), p. 209.

¹⁷Jarvie, ibid., pp. 239-240.

¹⁸Winch, 'Comment', ibid., p. 250.

¹⁹Jarvie, ibid., pp. 239-240.

²⁰Winch, ibid., p. 254.

²¹Jarvie, ibid., pp. 239-240.

²²Jarvie, ibid., p. 240.

²³Winch, ibid., p. 251.

²⁴Winch, ibid., p. 256.

²⁵Winch, ibid., pp. 254 and 256 respectively.

²⁶Winch, op. cit. ('Understanding...'), pp. 39-40.

²⁷Winch, ibid., p. 47.

²⁸Majjhima Nikāya I, 484-489 is the basis for this schema.

Chapter 2: Rationality in Early Buddhist Four Fold Logic

The fundamental importance of the issue of whether or not Buddhist thinkers violate the principle of contradiction has been recognized by some Buddhist scholars, yet has been dealt with in detail commensurate with its importance by few, and very rarely in the context of early Buddhism. J. Fritz Staal reminds us of the basic importance of this issue as follows:¹

We are often told that Indian philosophers do not accept the law of contradiction. This may well be one of the causes of the neglect of Indian thought by Western philosophers: for nobody desires to study a body of propositions when he is at the same time told that their contradictories may hold as well. Is it perhaps a new — and according to some superior — kind of logic to which we are invited to accustom ourselves? ... If Indian philosophers are either unaware of contradiction or deny the validity of the principle of contradiction, the structure of Indian logic would seem to be so fundamentally different from the structure of Western logic, that the possibility of mutual understanding may become questionable.

Indeed, the possibility of mutual understanding was a general concern of the last chapter, in which it was argued specifically that there is no reason to believe that contextual study of another culture and its external study in terms of some non-indigenous concepts are mutually exclusive possibilities. This is a negative argument which militates against the a priori exclusion of understanding the thought of another culture, and one which attempts to safeguard the theoretical possibility of the present study in particular. The concern of the present chapter is to extend this line of thinking by developing a positive, factual argument to the effect that understanding early Buddhism is in fact possible, since what counts as 'rationality' is not so different as it might at first seem.

Although there are many studies of the interpretation of, and significance to be attached to, Buddha's setting aside the famous

ten questions previously cited, and although there are various studies of the development of Indian logic, there has been comparatively little written on the logic of the early Buddhist four fold logic. Thus, the fundamental nature of the issue as well as the lack of interest in, or avoidance of, the issue on the part of many Indologists and philosophers who have not addressed it make it a particularly interesting and challenging one.

Staal offers some stimulating remarks on the four fold logic in Buddhism, but like many other scholars who deal with the topic, treats it after only a brief mention of the Pali formulation. Even within the scope which he delineates, however, there are some difficulties with his presentation, which is given in his recent book as well as in an earlier article.² His earlier discussion concludes:³

From this point of view the provisory results of the present paper can perhaps be formulated as follows. It could be shown, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, that neither the linguistic structure of Sanskrit, nor that of Greek, leads to a particular logical structure. In a detailed investigation it makes no sense to speak of the structure of a language. It has been shown, however; that certain structures of language, which are available in Sanskrit, in Greek, and in other languages, are related to particular logical doctrines. The problem then becomes, to see which particular linguistic structure is related to which particular logical doctrine. ... We have seen that the grammarian and Advaitin doctrines of negation have a linguistic background in the structure of the indicative mood of the verb, while the Mīmāṃsā doctrine has a linguistic background in the structure of the optative mood of the verb, which is reflected in the imperative.

An important question here is: precisely what is Staal claiming to have shown in saying 'certain structures of language ... are related to particular logical doctrines'? What sort of relationship is supposed to be uncovered? As he holds that it is not a 'leads to' relationship, and since the examples given (after the ellipses) characterize logical doctrines as having linguistic back-

grounds, the gist of the matter seems to be that certain logical doctrines just happen to have certain linguistic backgrounds. For there are only two possibilities here. Either 'structures of language' and 'logical doctrines' bear a necessary relationship to one another or a contingent one, and the author has denied that the former possibility obtains. Consequently it follows that the relationship is thought to be a contingent one. At this point it becomes clear that the problem with which Staal is concerned is not a philosophical one at all. The really interesting philosophical issue about 'Indian thought' initially posed viz., 'is it perhaps a new — and according to some superior — kind of logic to which we are invited to accustom ourselves?' is left unanswered, and the conclusion is about a contingent matter of fact.

In defense of Staal, however, it should be mentioned that he did not make such philosophical issues his primary concern, as is evident from his saying: 'the aim of the present study is to see how Indian thinkers treat contradictions and what explicit rules are given for the treatment of contradictions'.⁴ It is not being suggested that he slides from a philosophical issue to one of contingent fact, but that he has posed more questions than he has addressed. It would have been helpful to have initially distinguished the kinds of questions involved.

The importance of Staal's unanswered philosophical question mentioned above may be seen in another of his conclusions:⁵

The doctrines which have been discussed in this paper belong to numerous systems of thought and it would require much more space to study them fully within their own contexts. However, from the general logical viewpoint adopted here, the various interconnexions between the Indian systems on the one hand, and Aristotle on the other hand, have been more apparent than their divergent backgrounds. We have seen that in India, the law of contradiction is formulated and

strictly adhered to in grammar, in Advaita Vedānta, and in logic. In Mīmāṃsā the law of contradiction is discarded.

The footnote to this passage adds:

Since only the doctrines mentioned are dealt with in this paper, these conclusions do not imply that there are not also other systems where the law of contradiction is denied. Such systems exist in Buddhism. . . .

Several points are worth considering here. First, notice the claim that some Indian systems 'adhered to', while others 'discarded', the 'law of contradiction'. Recalling the unanswered philosophical question cited above, it becomes clear that Staal presupposes an answer to that very interesting question, the presuppositions being that it is in principle possible to 'discard' the law or principle, and that this has in fact been done in Mīmāṃsā and in some Buddhist writing. And regarding his usage of 'law', this is an old-fashioned conception of logic, one which has been replaced by a view of logic as a system of reasoning. Thirdly, whether one takes it as a principle or a law, there is no evidence provided to show that in early Buddhism there is a rejection of this fundamental logical tenant.

Of course if anyone refuses to observe the principle of contradiction (or 'noncontradiction', as it is sometimes called), then one cannot communicate logically with him insofar as he does so. But are there any grounds for saying that one must not 'discard' it? Whatever grounds might be offered would not convince a person who is not troubled by self-contradiction. Some mystics may feel thus untroubled and indeed that self-contradiction is the only way of expressing (even if not communicating) mystical experiences. But from a philosophical point of view, any attempt to 'discard' the principle of contradiction would result only in a Pyrrhic victory, in which freedom from criticism is secured at the price of having nothing to criticize.

Somewhat differently, however, Staal writes:⁶

The principle of noncontradiction prevents us from rejecting and accepting the same statement at the same time. One disconcerting consequence is that one cannot reject the principle of noncontradiction without, in doing so, accepting it. In general, it is just as senseless to expect that the improper use of words establishes the invalidity of logical principles, as to reject screwdrivers because we cannot fry eggs with them.

Staal seems uncertain as to whether it is a 'law' or a 'principle' he is discussing, and uses both terms. After noting that the four fold logic seems to violate the principle of noncontradiction, and that if it does so it is logically flawed, the argument continues with the charge that Raju, Robinson and Matilal fail to save the four fold logic (he uses the Sanskrit term catuṣkoṭi here). It can be saved, Staal suggests, if it is assumed that Nāgārjuna rejected all four possibilities represented by the four fold so that: 'in rejecting the third clause, the denial of the principle of noncontradiction is rejected, not the principle of noncontradiction itself.'⁷

But what, he asks, about the opponents of Mādhyamika who apparently accepted the third clause as a logical possibility? Dividing these into philosophers and non-philosophers he dispenses with the latter and divides the former into Buddhist and non-Buddhist camps. And importantly for the study of early Buddhism he writes:⁸

But confining ourselves in the present context to Buddhist philosophers of schools different from the Mādhyamika, we find that some of these thinkers did not regard the apparent contradiction of the third clause as a real contradiction, but interpreted it instead in a rational manner which is quite consistent with Aristotle's principle. They achieved this simply by observing that the predicate occurring in these alternatives should not in each case be taken as applicable to the same subject. This position implies, for example, that Māluṅkyāputta was wondering whether the sage in one sense can be said to exist after death, and in another not to exist after death. Such double questions are often expressed by means of an apparent contradiction, either for rhetorical effect or merely on account of carelessness...

Staal sees rationalism and irrationalism as opposing views linked to the acceptance and rejection of the principle (or law) of noncontradiction respectively. In this conflict he takes the side of rationalism and stresses 'rational solution' and 'rational interpretation' as characteristics of Indian treatment of the third part of the four fold logic, rhetorically commenting:⁹

In the case of apparent contradictions, which the Buddha mentioned, he does not even consider the irrationalist interpretation which would regard them as real contradictions. So why should we?...

Whatever will turn out to be the correct interpretation of the Madhyamika position, an irrationalist interpretation of Buddhist doctrines by modern scholars is readily explained by the prevailing Western prejudice that religion and oriental philosophy are basically irrational. If we approach Buddhist thought on its own terms, there appears to be little justification, if any, to speak of "Buddhist irrationalism".

There are difficulties with Staal's exposition, however. He does not distinguish between emotive rejection and logical denial, and consequently makes a statement which, on one important sense of 'reject' (the emotive), is false. For he holds 'one cannot reject the principle of noncontradiction without, in doing so, accepting it' (p. 41). And it is clear that a Ch'an or Zen master may indeed reject the standard conventions of speech which involve the use of the principle of noncontradiction in an attempt to jolt his disciple into enlightenment. Even if the koan uttered by the master admits of no logical explanation, being logically unintelligible when examined simply as a proposition, it does not follow that there is no point or intention involved in the master's uttering it. The principle of noncontradiction is not a sort of invisible law, like gravity, which 'prevents us' from doing things; nor is it the case that 'one cannot reject' it without accepting it. While it would be self-defeating to formulate a propositional denial of the principle of noncontradiction, this is not the only way in which it can be

'rejected'.

Further, one may accept Staal's view of all of Buddhism as rational in the sense of not rejecting the principle of noncontradiction, and then show that it leads to absurdity. He recognizes the important historical links between South Asian Buddhism and East Asian Buddhism by dubbing Nāgārjuna as 'the father of the Mādhyamika, the grandfather of Ch'an, and the great-grandfather of Zen', but fails to draw a damaging conclusion from the juxtaposition of this statement of the historical reality with the overarching view of Buddhist rationalism which he professes.¹⁰ On that view some, if not all, of the Zen master's koan method is radically unintelligible. This consequence is hardly a happy one in view of the historical links which Staal stresses above.

Of course Staal is quite right to insist that 'Buddhist irrationalism' will not do as a label for Buddhism as a whole. The difficulty here, though, is that he swings to the opposite extreme thinking that 'Buddhist rationalism' will do for all sects and makes the sweeping claim, 'not only certain traditions in Buddhism, but Oriental mystical doctrines in general are rational'.¹¹ This general point cannot be adequately argued with reference to South Asian texts alone as the author does in the 'Buddhist Irrationalism' section of his book. Nor is it obvious how his assertion of the opposite thesis of 'Buddhist rationalism' in terms of the principle of noncontradiction is supposed to square with his (footnoted) claim that some Buddhists 'discard' that very principle.

Now I would like to return to the part of Staal's argument which has particular significance for the interpretation of early Buddhism (p. 41). The example given is from sutta 63 of the Majjhima Nikāya, in which Buddha is depicted as disabusing Mālunkya-putta of the erroneous notion that the validity of the Buddhist path is contingent upon holding certain metaphysical

positions of philosophers from among the options in the famous ten questions cited earlier. Two things are important here in understanding the four fold logic: the language used in order to express the attitude which Buddha is said to have taken to these questions according to the Pali texts, and the Pali phraseology of the four fold pattern in particular. The context is one in which Mālunkyāputta expresses doubt about the validity of the Buddhist path as follows:¹²

Atha kho āyasmato Mālunkyāputtasa rahogatassa paṭisa-
llīnassa evaṃ cetaso parivitaṅko udāpadi: Yān'imāni
diṭṭhigatāni Bhagavatā abyākatāni ṭhapitāni paṭikkhittāni:
Sassato loko iti pi, asassato loko iti pi... No ce me
Bhagavā byākarissati: Sassato loko ti vā, asassato loko
ti vā, -- pe -- n'eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param
maraṇā ti vā, evāhaṃ sikkhaṃ paccakkhāya hīnāy'
āvattissāmīti.

The Pali Text Society translation (in this case by I. B. Horner)
renders the excerpt as follows:¹³

Then a reasoning of mind arose to the venerable Malunkya-
putta as he was meditating in solitary seclusion, thus:
"Those (speculative) views that are not explained, set aside
and ignored by the Lord: The world is eternal, the world is
not eternal... But if the Lord will not explain to me either
that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal...
or that the Tathagata neither is nor is not after dying, then
will I, disavowing the training, revert to secular life."

This much is background, and the Pali phraseology of the four
fold logic in this sutta runs as follows:¹⁴

hoti tathāgato param'maraṇā iti pi, na hoti tathāgato param'
maraṇā iti pi, hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato param'maraṇā iti
pi, n'eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param'maraṇā iti pi...

This is translated by Horner as:¹⁵

the Tathagata is after dying, the Tathagata is not after dying,
the Tathagata both is and is not after dying, the Tathagata
neither is nor is not after dying...

The problem is how to interpret 'hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato
param'maraṇā iti pi'. For taken at face value and translated

straightforwardly, the third position violates the principle of contradiction (or noncontradiction) and does not delineate any possible state of affairs. Staal mentions a possible resolution to the puzzle as 'simply observing that the predicate occurring in these alternatives should not in each case be taken as applicable to the same subject' (quoted here on p. 41). And it needs to be added 'in the same sense', in order to cover the possibility that 'hoti' might have been meant in two different senses, in addition to covering the possibility that the subject (tathāgata) might have been meant in two different senses.

K. N. Jayatilleke who, in the context of early Buddhist thought, has struggled with the puzzle of the interpretation of the four fold logic as well, has three published works which touch upon it (1950, 1963, and posthumously in 1975). Perhaps more than any other Pali Buddhist scholar, he has recognized the fundamental importance of this issue. Like Staal, he believes that the third position can be correctly interpreted in a way which is 'rational' in the sense that it does not reject the principle of contradiction. Unlike him, however, he does not suppose that the sphere of application of his solution extends to all of Buddhism.

The point of departure for Jayatilleke's earliest work on the subject (1950) is his considering some difficulties in translation.

He observes:¹⁵

There would be psychological experiences denoted by words of the one language for which there would be no precise parallels in the other language and what is more important, there would be differences in the concepts due to varying ways in which the respective peoples would have noticed and classified the various empirical situations apparently found in the environments of both languages. This latter tendency may be so marked as to give rise to a different logic or different standards in the use of words in each language.

And specifically on the four fold logic, he continues:¹⁶

they are logically contingent propositions though in the form

in which they appear when they are literally translated into English is such as to suggest to the reader of the English that they are contradictions or logically impossible propositions which are necessarily false. We are thus faced with a situation in which a difference in the system of logical classification adopted in each language seriously interferes with literal translation which fails to do justice either to the language from which or in which the translation is done.

While his interpretation of the four fold logic is, in general, clear and coherent enough, when he goes on to give an example, difficulties arise. For he goes on to say:¹⁷

If we ignore the factors of time, location and causal changes with reference to a situation or thing it will be found that any predication made of it can be from a diversity of standpoints is true, false, both true and false and neither true nor false respectively. For instance we may consider the assertion "it rained in Colombo" to be true if it was the case that it rained in Colombo yesterday, false if we take into account the fact that it did not rain day before yesterday, both true and false if we take both yesterday and day before yesterday into consideration and neither true nor false if we do not view it in respect of any specific interval of past time.

One difficulty here is that 'if we ignore the factors of time, location and causal changes with reference to a situation or thing', then we cannot formulate any proposition whatsoever. That these are ignored is a major problem with utterances like 'Being exists' when offered as propositions. Hence, it is in principle impossible that an example of a proposition can be provided which meets Jayatilleke's conditions. It is not surprising then that, secondly, Jayatilleke's example in practice fails to meet the conditions. 'It rained in Colombo' obviously does not ignore location, despite the fact that one might ask 'where in Colombo?'. Nor does it ignore time, since whenever it is asserted it refers to a span of time from that of its utterance indefinitely far back into the past and could not refer to any point in the future. Thus the example is

neither altogether spatially nor temporally indeterminate.

Further, 'it rained in Colombo' asserted at time T_1 is true if it has rained in Colombo on at least one occasion prior to T_1 , and false if it has not. From this it follows that it could not be 'both true and false if we take both yesterday and the day before yesterday into consideration'. And if, as Jayatilleke's example supposes, it rained in Colombo yesterday but not the day before yesterday, then 'it rained in Colombo' would be true, rather than both true and false. Thus, the author's treatment of the last quoted passage is both flawed in principle and false in detail.

A strong point of Jayatilleke's account of the four fold pattern, however, is that he does not confuse Jaina with Buddhist logic (the four fold being included within the Jaina seven fold logic) and notes:¹⁸

For while truth or falsity was relative according to the Jaina theory owing to the diversity of standpoints (*anekāntavāda*) the Buddhists held at least certain propositions to be absolutely true (*ekāṃsika*, D. N. I, 191).

Jayatilleke continues his consideration of the logic of early Buddhism, focusing on the last two positions of the four fold pattern, and produces two examples which he believes are better accounted for by, and lend some credence to, the early Buddhist four fold as opposed to a standard system of two-valued logic. The proposed anomalous examples are: 'is this milk or not milk?' (asked about a substance which is 20% milk and 80% water), and 'is Mr. Braithwaite bald or not bald?' (asked about Braithwaite at a time when he has only a few hairs on his head). In view of such cases Jayatilleke distinguishes four alternative reactions:¹⁹

The first is to see which of the two propositions is likely to be more true than false in the situation and classify it as such without violating the logical principles. But this is not feasible if both appear to be equally true or equally false as appears to be the case in the context discussed above. If we again want to preserve the validity of the logical prin -

ciples which state that every proposition must be either true or false and can't be both, we can only do this by ceasing to treat an assertion in such a situation as a genuine proposition, which is the solution that Prof. Lewy offers and to which we raised the objections mentioned in the previous paragraph. The two other alternatives left are either to regard the logical principles as being invalid or as needing amendment. The former is too drastic a course to adopt. . . .

Prof. Lewy here speaks of adopting a different system of logic for a different world in which all the situations were such that they could not be aptly described by assertions of the form 'S is P' and 'S is not P'. But our present world is one in which only some of the situations were of this sort, so that the system of logic that we need is one which could cope with these situations as well as with what we regard as the normal ones.

The author then suggests that the best course is to adopt an amended logic of the following structure:²⁰

- (1) S is P.
- (2) S is-and-is not-P (To be distinguished from 'It is both the case that S is P and also that S is not P').
- (3) S is not P.

Unfortunately, the situation is not so simple, and a careful examination of the way in which he disposes of the various possibilities reveals that there are many loopholes. It can be objected, for example, that a mixture of 20% milk and 80% water obviously contains more water than milk, so that the first alternative of determining what is 'more true than false' cannot be dismissed with the suggestion that 'it is water' is 'equally true or false'. The language of 'more true than false' is problematic, however, and rather than admitting such a logically ambiguous category, it is preferable to hold, on alternative two, that the proposition-candidate must be formulated more precisely before it can be dealt with. But baldness is not a good example. For 'being bald' just means 'having no hair', so that if a person has yet a single hair, then it would be false to say of him 'he is bald', true to say 'he is not bald', and more precise but no more true to say 'he is almost bald'. As long as one understands bald/not

bald as a distinction of kind rather than as a matter of degree, there is no difficulty in assigning truth values to the propositions in question. Indeed, this is the common understanding, as when one says of a person with a few remaining hairs that he is 'getting bald' or 'is balding', rather than that he 'is bald'.

The difficulty is that Jayatilleke has not provided cogent reasons for rejecting the second alternative altogether. For the above line could be offered as I have suggested, and it seems to me that Jayatilleke moves rather quickly over the second alternative, dismissing the third as well, in the rush to conclude that the fourth is correct: an amended logic is needed. In particular it is not a consequence of Lewy's defense of the second alternative, contrary to what Jayatilleke alleges, that 'we cannot say on his theory that a particular combination of words, which may be grammatically correct and semantically significant (i. e. does not violate the formation rules), expresses a proposition until we have examined the ostensible facts to which it refers'.

In this first of his three published attempts to grapple with a difficult problem, Jayatilleke concludes by considering the fourth position (neither/nor) as exemplified this time by 'conscious' (saññī) rather than by 'liberated one' (tathāgata):²¹

- (1) saññī — he is conscious
- (2) asaññī — he is unconscious
- (3) saññī ca asaññī ca — he is semiconscious
- (4) nevasaññīnāsaññī — he is superconscious or conscious in a way radically different from (1), (2) or (3).

The exact use of paradigms (3) and (4) can only be discovered by an exhaustive analysis of the several usages of this sort found in the Canon. In this article we are content to raise the problem rather than to offer any solution which has for the present to be very tentative in character. Our contention is that assertions of the type (3) and (4) are contingent propositions which should be translated as such by examining what they mean instead of merely repeating in the English the

word form of the Pali, which would be meaningless owing to the difference in the systems of logical classification adopted. And the Fourfold Schema of the classification of propositions seems to be as follows with the Laws of Contradiction and Exclusion as redefined above. —

- (1) 'X is A' is true where the full or standard criteria are present.
- (2) 'X is not A' is true where no criteria are present.
- (3) 'X is-and-is-not A' is true where insufficient criteria are present.
- (4) 'X is-neither-A-nor-not A' is true where criteria are present but of a different sort from (1), (2) or (3).

Two things are important here: first, that any solid interpretation requires textual exegesis at length, ideally an 'exhaustive analysis' as he puts it; secondly, that a literal translation (such as the one Horner gives) of the third position is meaningless, however faithful it may be to dictionary meanings. These are more like reasons for undertaking the investigation in the first place, however, rather than startling or even interesting points on which to conclude. Further, there is no talk of criteria in the Pali versions of the four fold logic, and in section II of this chapter I offer an alternative account to (1) through (4) above.

Jayatilleke's next attempt to deal with the enigmatic third and fourth positions of the four fold logic occurs in his major published work of 1963. He gives here an account of which schools of thought flourishing at the time may be associated with each of the ten questions, an historical treatment which is a landmark in Buddhist scholarship. In what follows the concern is with only certain of his remarks in that work which bear on the philosophical and interpretive issue at hand.

Jayatilleke takes Poussin to task for saying:²²

Indians do not make a clear distinction between facts and ideas, between ideas and words; they have never clearly recognized the principle of contradiction. Buddhist dialectic has a four-branched dilemma: Nirvana is existence

or non-existence or both existence and non-existence or neither existence nor non-existence. We are helpless.

Four reasons are given for rejecting Poussin's account, the first reason applying to Poussin's claim about what Indians in general fail to do, and the remainder applying specifically to Buddhists.²³

- 1) 'We find as early as Uddālaka an awareness in Indian thought of the importance of consistency and the principle of Contradiction, when it was held that it could not both be true that Being came out of Being and Non-Being'. 2) 'In the Nikāyas, consistency is regarded as a criterion of truth and it is stated that 'truth is one and not two', *ekaṃ hi saccaṃ na duttiyaṃ atthi*, Sn. 884'.
- 3) 'The dilemmas present two alternatives one of which is the contradiction of the other'. 4) 'Infact, in one place in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, we come very close to a formal statement of the principle of Non-Contradiction. Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta converses with Citta and in the course of the discussion... Citta is anxious to show that Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta is contradicting himself and says, *sace purimaṃ saccaṃ pacchimaṃ te micchā, sace pacchimaṃ saccaṃ purimaṃ te micchā*, i. e. if your former statement (p) is true, your latter statement ($\neg p$) is false and if your latter statement ($\neg p$) is true, your former statement (p) is false.'²⁴

On 3) as further elaborated by Jayatilleke elsewhere, it turns out on his view that the passage under consideration (cited as M. I. 392) is evidence for the Buddhist position presupposing the principle of the excluded middle. As A. S. Hanson has shown, these principles have sometimes been confused (e. g., by Conze), and the case at hand is another one which Hanson might have added.²⁵ Yet 2) and 4) remain powerful considerations in favor of the view that, contra Poussin, there is no denial of the principle of contradiction. But it is important to keep in mind (as is discussed in II) that early Buddhism does not set out a formal logical principle of contradiction,

nor do they use symbolic notation where Jayatilleke has supplied it.

Another difficulty with Poussin's account concerns his description of the four fold as 'a four-branched dilemma'. The Buddha is not depicted as issuing a denial of each of the four positions, for 'mā h'evam' means 'do not say so' rather than 'it is not the case that' and this was his reported response. The point is just that the validity of the Buddhist path is not contingent upon the acceptance of any of these four positions, since in any case there is suffering or unsatisfactoriness and a path for the elimination of it. The point is not that none of the four positions is logically free from difficulty and hence that one is in a philosophical dilemma, for that would be to deny each of the four positions. Thus I think that 'a four branched dilemma' is misleading, if it is taken to imply that the Buddha did deny these four.

Yet another misleading interpretation of the four fold logic is to regard them as articulating 'laws of thought', as Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids and Barua have held, and here Jayatilleke's criticism of them is right on target.²⁶ Indeed, twisting the text to find in it the 'laws' of identity, contradiction, excluded middle and double negation as formal logical principles is, I believe, such an embarrassment to Buddhist scholarship as to merit going unmentioned, except perhaps as a reminder of how it is just possible that Buddha may have said something sensible without being a logician.

What sense can in fact be made of the four fold pattern, now that it is clearly neither a gratuitous breach of logic (Poussin) nor a formulation of logical laws (C.A.F. Rhys Davids, Barua), is a question Jayatilleke takes up as follows in his 1963 account:

(565) Now what do these propositions really mean? We have already attempted to answer this question in an article en-

titled 'Some Problems of Translation and Interpretation II', and we do not propose to repeat this here. We intend merely to summarize briefly the gist of what we have said and make some added observations.

(566) Since then there have been a few articles written around this subject but in none of them is there a serious attempt to clarify the problems involved.

It is curious that Jayatilleke's article, previously found to be full of difficulties, had conclusions which the author himself characterized as 'very tentative', and yet are characterized in his later book as if they require no further examination but only additional remarks. Curious, too, is his rather condescending remark at (566) directed against P. T. Raju, Archie J. Bahm, and Shosun Miyamoto. Whatever difficulties may be found in the work of these scholars, the indiscriminate claim, 'in none of them is there a serious attempt to clarify the problems involved', seems rather harsh.²⁷

And there are difficulties. Raju, for example, describes the skeptics of ancient India (e. g. , Sanjaya) as 'those philosophers who gave a negative answer to all four questions', and yet compares Sanjay to Pyrrho in reasoning: 'for he would not only not say a definite "yes" to any question, but also not give a definite "No"'.²⁸ Although Jayatilleke gives not this, but another example of self-contradiction in Raju's article, it is the sort of thing which has prompted the former to complain: 'where he has tried to throw some light, in passing, on the four-fold formula of the Pali Nikayas, it is either not backed up with good evidence or it is plainly self-contradictory.'

Raju suggests that the distinction between contrary and contradictory opposition may help elucidate the four fold pattern without, however, there being any terms translatable as 'contrary' and 'contradictory' in the Indian material. This is, on

the author's own admission, speculative in not being terminologically grounded in early Buddhist texts, but as is argued in Ch. 1 of this work, the application of a non-indigenous concept to elucidate a given position cannot be ruled out a priori. Accordingly, this suggestion of Raju's is worth examining.

While not mentioning that Raju considers this suggestion, Jayatilleke credits Archie Bahm with making²⁹,

a significant contribution towards solving the riddle (logical) of the four-fold assertions. . . . According to this theory we do not fall into logical difficulties if we treat not-P (in the four assertions) as the contrary and not the contradictory of P. This is in principle the solution that we had offered in our own treatment of the subject and we shall further examine this solution below.

The irony of the situation consists in the fact that, having given the reader the impression that Raju's article is an irredeemable mass of confusion, and having criticized Bahm for admittedly gleaning some information from reading Raju's article, he then credits Bahm with a point very similar to Raju's point. This point, that the four-fold logic might be interpreted in a manner which is not self-contradictory, is explained differently however, for Raju uses contrary/contradictory as the operative distinction while Bahm uses opposite/contradictory. According to Raju:³⁰

In the four-cornered negation, the negation of both B and not-B may appear to be a little puzzling. But it can be explained with the help of the difference between contrary and contradictory opposition of western logic. Two contraries can both be negated, but not the contradictories.

In the last quoted sentence the phrase 'and the resulting statement be true' is not found as it (or a semantically equivalent phrase) should be found just before the comma. For Raju's intention seems to be to say that 'All S is P' may be denied as well as its contrary, 'No S is P', and yet it may still be the case that 'Some S is P'; on the other hand, if 'All S is P' and its contradictory, 'Some S is

not P', are both denied, then there is no middle ground (cp. 'Some S is P') which may be affirmed as true.

Bahm offers the following explanation:³¹

But if on the other hand, "is" and "is not" (or "a" and "non-a") are interpreted as opposites rather than as contradictories and "neither is nor is not" (or "neither a nor non-A") is interpreted not as involving an excluded middle but as presupposing that there is something which is neither the one nor the other (its opposite), then no contradiction is involved'.

Now I want to reply, first to the suggestion of Jayatilleke and Raju (in terms of contrary/contradictory) and then to the suggestion of Bahm (in terms of opposites). The difficulty is that if one follows Jayatilleke's advice and treats 'not-p (in the four assertions) as the contrary and not the contradictory of p', then they might possibly all be false, for 'two propositions are said to be contraries if they cannot both be true, though they might both be false'.³² But if it was thought possible that they might all be false, then no one would have been surprised that the Buddha set them all aside.

Further, if one takes 'not p' in each occurrence of the four fold logic as subcontraries, an unacceptable consequence follows here as well. For 'two propositions are said to be subcontraries if they cannot both be false, though they might both be true'. And it is the intention of Jaina logic in its theory of syādvāda to admit the possibility that all the positions might be true, somehow or in some respect, but such a view is quite foreign to early Buddhism wherein truth is one and not two.

Miyamoto's approach and that of Robinson are mentioned by Jayatilleke, and it is worthwhile to notice an underlying similarity in the two approaches.³³ Both try to assimilate Buddhism to other systems of thought. In Miyamoto's case this assimilation is an historical, Eastern contextual one, in which the four fold logic turns out to fit neatly both into Sanjaya's system and into that of the Jaina as well, while in the case of Robinson the attempt is

made to assimilate it to a Western (specifically Aristotelian) context. As might be expected, neither of these attempts are successful. Robinson conveniently supplies 'all' and 'some', which are not found in the original, in order to squeeze the text into the logical AEIO form.³³ In this perhaps he supposes that he is doing Buddhism a favor. And Miyamoto tends to ignore the 'somehow' qualification on each of the Jaina seven propositions, in view of which it is quite different in orientation from the Buddhist four fold logic.

Turning to Jayatilleke's positive remarks for interpreting the four fold pattern, it is clear that he wants to maintain two things which turn out to be an impossible combination: that occurrences of 'na' (not) be interpreted as contraries rather than as contradictories; that the four fold logic is nevertheless exhaustive of the logical possibilities.³⁴ He does not see that this is an impossible marriage, yet the difficulty remains that if 'na' is interpreted not as having its usual denying function but as stating contraries in its occurrences in the four fold pattern, then the four fold cannot be set up in truth table fashion, as Jayatilleke does, and cannot be interpreted as exhausting the logical possibilities. For the contradictories would have been left out of account. This is a fundamental inconsistency in Jayatilleke's account viewed internally, leaving aside the point that there is no direct textual support for inserting '(contrary)' below at II.

Comparing his published work of 1963 with his posthumously published account of 1975, it is evident that he changed the interpretation so as not to leave the contradictories out of account. The 1963 account runs (leaving aside the truth-tables):³⁵

- I. p
- II. notp (contrary)
- III. both p and notp
- IV. neither p nor notp

Using the notation 'notp' (rather than 'not p') to indicate contrary opposition (rather than denial of a contradictory), the above account entirely leaves contradictories out of the picture. But in a later account (1975) a contradictory relation obtains between I and 2 below:³⁶

1. The universe is finite (in all dimensions).
2. The universe is infinite (in all dimensions).
3. The universe is finite (in some dimensions) and infinite (in other dimensions).
4. The universe is neither finite nor infinite (in any dimension). This last alternative would be the case if space or the universe was unreal. In such an eventuality, the universe cannot properly be described as either 'finite' or 'infinite'.

But no explanation is given for the change of interpreting 2 as a contradictory rather than as a contrary statement as at II. If this is not to be sheerly a matter of caprice, some justification is in order.

Thus, it has been shown that even scholars most concerned with early Buddhism in particular have failed to give an adequate, consistent treatment of the four fold logic in early Buddhism, let alone those who presuppose that it must mean the same thing in all of Buddhism and those who are more concerned with Mahayana tradition. In the section which follows I propose to see if a coherent account of the early Buddhist four fold pattern can be found which is free from the difficulties discovered thus far.

Notes: Chapter 2, I

¹ J. F. Staal, 'Negation and the law of contradiction in Indian thought' in Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 25 (1962), pp. 52-53.

² Fritz Staal, Exploring Mysticism (London, Penguin Books, 1975).

³ J. F. Staal, 'Negation...' op. cit., pp. 71 and 65.

⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

⁵ Ibid., p. 68. Staal thinks that the law of contradiction only holds with reference to indicative sentences and not for sentences in other moods, such as optative and imperative ones. I do not think that he has argued this adequately. Contradictory commands, say, fail to urge that an action be carried out in a parallel way to the way in which contradictory indicative statements fail to characterize a state of affairs.

⁶ Fritz Staal, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁸ Ibid., p. 48.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 49 and 54.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 40.

¹² V. Trenckner (ed.), Majjhima Nikāya vol. I (London, Pali Text Society, Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1970), p. 426.

¹³ I. B. Horner (trans.), The Middle Length Sayings vol. II (London, Pali Text Society, Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1970), p. 97.

Notes: Ch. 2, I (cond.)

¹⁴Horner op. cit., p. 97; Majjhima Nikāya I, 426.

¹⁵K. N. Jayatilleke, 'Some Problems of Translation and Interpretation II' in University of Ceylon Review vol. VIII no. 1, January 1950), pp. 45-46.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 46-47.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 51-52.

²⁰Ibid., p. 52.

²¹Ibid., p. 55.

²²L. de la V. Poussin, The Way to Nirvana (Cambridge University Press, 1917), p. 111. Quoted in K. N. Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge (London, Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 333.

²³Jayatilleke op cit., p. 334.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 226-227.

²⁵A. S. Hanson, 'Buddhism and Logic' in The Middle Way 45 (1970), pp. 70-72.

²⁶Jayatilleke op cit., pp. 334-335.

²⁷Ibid., p. 335.

²⁸P. T. Raju, 'The Principle of Four-Cornered Negation in Indian Philosophy' in Review of Metaphysics VII (1954), pp. 694-713.

- ²⁹ Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 337.
- ³⁰ Raju, op. cit., p. 710.
- ³¹ Archie Bahm, quoted in Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 337.
- ³² Copi, Irving M., Introduction to Logic 4th ed., New York, Macmillan, 1972, p. 156; square of opposition, p. 158.
- ³³ Jayatilleke, op. cit., pp. 337-339; pp. 350-351.
- ³⁴ Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 345.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 345.
- ³⁶ K. N. Jayatilleke, The Message of the Buddha ed. by Ninian Smart (London, Allen and Unwin, 1975), p. 50.

It is clear from the preceeding discussion that Jayatilleke sometimes uses formal logical notation to explain early Buddhist logic. Along the same line it might be thought that there is explicit recognition of the formal logical principle of contradiction in early Buddhism. For example, at Majjhima Nikāya I 232 the Pali reads:¹

Manasikarohi Aggivessaṇa, manasikaritvā kho Aggivessana byākarohi, na kho te sandhiyati purimena vā pacchimam pacchimena vā purimam.

I. B. Horner translates this passage as:²

Pay attention, Aggivessana. When you have paid attention, Aggivessana, answer. For your last speech does not agree with your first, nor your first with your last.

The word 'speech' has been supplied by the translator, presumably because the appropriate verb 'vadesi' occurs previously as the likely referent of the elliptical construction. The non-agreement in question is thus a non-agreement of utterances. While two psychological states, utterances, sentences, or propositions may in one way or another 'fail to agree', the logical principle of contradiction is formulated by logicians as applying specifically to propositions, rather than to utterances, for example.

Further, the sort of lack of agreement meant in the Pali above is not specifically formal logical agreement. The verb 'sandhiyati' (= 'sandahati') means 'to put together', 'to connect', or 'to arrange'. However, it might be argued that since its etymology reveals a combination of 'dahati' (= 'to put, place; take for, assume, claim, consider')³ plus 'sam' ('with'), 'sandhiyati' could thus be rendered as 'to claim with'. Even so, in order to have a specifically formal logical point to the effect that there is a formal logical principle of noncontradiction, there would have to

be some word comparable to 'proposition' referred to here. Instead one finds that the referent is 'speech.' Thus I would translate 'na kho te sandhīyati purimena vā pacchimaṃ pacchimena vā purimaṃ' as 'you do not indeed connect the latter (utterance) with the former (utterance), nor the former with the latter.'

Seeing the Pali passage in its context may be helpful. Aggivessana states that the five aggregates (usually translated 'form, feeling, sensations, dispositions, and consciousness') comprise the self, but also admits that they are impermanent. Gotama Buddha points out that these utterances do not agree with one another. 'But is it fitting', he is depicted as saying, 'to regard that which is impermanent, anguish, liable to change as "This is mine, this am I, this is my self?"' And the story continues with Aggivessana's response: 'This is not so, good Gotama.' Since it is included in the meaning of the term 'self' ('attan'; Skt. ātman) that it is permanent, for one thing, anything proposed as a 'self' was definitionally disqualified without this characteristic. Hence Aggivessana's former characterization of what the self is does not cohere with his latter admission of what the term 'attan' means.

At Majjhima Nikāya I 378 there occurs another interesting case, in which one finds:³

Gahapati gahapati, manasikarivā kho gahapati byākarohi, na kho te sandhīyati purimena vā pacchimaṃ pacchimena vā purimaṃ. Bhāsita kho pana te gahapati esā vācā: sacce ahaṃ bhante patitthāya mantessāmi, hoti no ettha kathā-sallāpo ti.

Horner translates this as:⁴

Householder, householder! Take care how you explain, householder. Your earlier (remarks) do not tally with your later, nor your later with your earlier. And yet these words were spoken by you, householder: 'I revered sir, will speak as one grounded on the truth. Let us have some conversation here.'

Again 'sandhiyati' occurs, and this time is translated as 'tally' rather than as 'agree', but unlike in the preceding example, the relationship between consistency and truth is noted: one cannot be speaking in accord with the truth if what one says is inconsistent. Yet it is noteworthy that 'sacca' (translated as 'truth' above) can mean both 'real' as well as 'true', truth of being or authenticity on the one hand being indicated by the same word as truth of utterance on the other. The last quoted Pali selection contains an example of the latter usage, and the former is exemplified in such terms as 'saccanāma', doing justice to one's name, bearing a true name', as said of Gotama Buddha, for example.⁵ The idea is plainly one of being true to one's name in the sense of living as one's name implies. For instance, since 'Buddha' means 'enlightened one', the appropriate behavior is required in order to be saccanāma.⁶ Another example of 'sacca' in the sense of 'truth of utterance', this time from Samyutta Nikāya 4XLI 8, 10, runs as follows:

Sace te bhante purimaṃ saccam pacchimaṃ te micchā sace
pana te bhante pacchimaṃ saccam purimaṃ te micchā.

As rendered by C. A. F. Rhys Davids this means:⁷

If, sir, your first assertion was true, your last was false.
And if your last was true, your first was false.

Translations of the assertions are: 'I would have you look, sirs, how straight is this housefather Citta, how guileless is this housefather Citta, how ingenuous is this housefather Citta', and 'I would have you look, sirs, how crooked is this housefather Citta, how crafty, how dishonest is this housefather Citta'. In this context the former is uttered by Nigantha after Citta states that he does not have faith (saddhā) in Gotama's teachings; the latter after Citta clarifies that instead of faith he has knowledge and vision

(jānanto passanto) of Gotama Buddha's teachings. Nigantha is evidently not pleased with these teachings.

There is a problem in interpreting 'sacca' and 'micchā' if one goes only by the textual references provided for these terms in the Pali Text Society's dictionary. For while this work lists meanings of 'sacca' supported by textual references which exemplify the dual meanings of truth of being or authenticity as well as truth of utterance, its account of 'micchā' cites no textual references in which falsity of utterance is meant, despite the fact that 'false' is listed as a possible meaning. Aside from compounds (in which it typically has an ethical slant) the dictionary lists these meanings: 'separate'. 'opposite', 'contrary', 'wrongly', 'in a wrong way', 'false'. After 'false' references to Sutta Nipāta verses 438 and 815 are given, but these in fact have to do with living wrongly from the early Buddhist viewpoint ('micchāladdho' and 'micchā' being use to condemn pride and lechery respectively), rather than with falsehood as a property of utterances.⁸ The last passage quoted above (in fn. 7) might well have been cited as a usage of 'micchā' as a property of utterances.

In addition to its application to speech or utterances, 'micchā' is also applied to diṭṭhi (views or speculative views, depending on context) and to saṅkappa (intentional thoughts), for example.⁹ Of course right and wrong are opposites just as true and false are. And a justification for holding that 'micchā' means 'wrong' sometimes and not 'false' always (contra PTS dictionary) consists in the fact that, e. g., 'sammāvācā' is used as right view in contrast to wrong view.

It is also important to notice that there are terms to mark a distinction between 'intentional thoughts' and 'utterances' ('saṅkappa' and 'vācā'). Hence it is not plausible to argue that there is no rough linguistic basis for a distinction between propositions

and speech and that if there had been one, the early Buddhist view would have been a view about propositions. If there had been any interest to state a formal logical principle and use a notion of proposition, this could have been done. In fact, I find no occurrences in early Buddhism of the terms for proposition listed in A. P. Buddhadatta's English-Pali Dictionary viz., kattukamyatāñāpana, pakāsa, and mūladhamma.

Utterances, unlike propositions or thoughts, may be soft or loud, said in haste or in a drawl, made in a cubicle or in a theater at a certain time, etc. whereas none of these are true of propositions or of thoughts in the same sense. But in saying this it is not being suggested that propositions or thoughts inhabit a ghostly realm somewhere, nor that early Buddhism offers a theory or a technical distinction between thoughts and utterances. But the concepts available in early Buddhism could have been used as a basis for such a distinction had it been important. In fact, this and many other theoretical concerns are unimportant in early Buddhism, and instead the main focus is on liberation.

Articulating the distinction between propositions and thoughts, on the one hand, and utterances, on the other, may well hide a dualist snare, and rather than risking a fall into it, the above way of stating the matter is preferable: different things may be truly said of the one which are not true of the other.

K. N. Jayatilleke was not very clear about whether early Buddhism in fact contains a 'formal statement of the principle of Contradiction', or just that here 'we come very close to a formal statement of the principle', and at one point states:¹⁰

Citta is anxious to show that Nigantha Nataputta is contradicting himself and says, *sace purimam saccam pacchimam te miccha, sace pacchimam saccam purimam te miccha*, i. e. if your former statement (p) is true, your latter state-

ment ($\neg p$) is false and if your latter statement ($\neg p$) is true, your former statement (p) is false. In other words, in the above situation when the statements are of the form p and $\neg p$, it cannot be the case that both p and $\neg p$ are true ($\neg (p \wedge \neg p)$), which is the formal statement of the principle of Contradiction.

In order for Jayatilleke's interpretation above to work, however, his word 'statement' must be construed as 'proposition' (rather than as 'utterance'), but in that sense there is no referent in the Pali passage. The text makes it clear that it is utterances which are the foci of attention (not thoughts or propositions one may emphasize), and by using p and $\neg p$ as signs for propositions, Jayatilleke is led to the mistaken conclusion that the text gives a 'formal statement of the principle of Contradiction'. By using the words 'bhāsitam' ('saying') and 'etad avoca' ('this said'), the text makes it perfectly clear that the former and latter, the purimam and pacchimaṃ, which contradict one another are utterances. Other examples bear this out as well, and I have found no counter-evidence in the five Nikāyas. Thus I conclude that Jayatilleke's interpretation above is mistaken.

In early Buddhism views, thoughts, and utterances may or may not be false as distinct from whether or not they are wrong, and when the early exclusion of self-contradiction is formulated, it is clear that it is not formulated as a formal logical point but one about utterances. Perhaps if there had been a concern to make a point about propositions, the word 'vāda' could have been used, yet it is often translated as 'speech' and only in its usage as 'view', 'doctrine', or 'belief' is there any approximation to 'proposition', and even here it is not close. For in this sense it means 'emphatic or formulated speech' in the sense of 'doctrine'. The fact is that there is no early Buddhist term which might be

translated as 'proposition' without a good deal of extrapolation. There is a term for 'wrong speech' and 'lie', however, (musā-vāda) so that 'false speech' (micchāvāda) is distinguishable from 'wrong speech' (musāvāda) in the first of two meanings just mentioned.

'Micchā' is applied to views (diṭṭhi), thoughts (sāṅkappo), and utterances (vācā), meaning 'false view, false conception, false speech' respectively, according to a translation by Horner.¹¹ Thus, in early Buddhism a distinction is evident between false utterances or speech, on the one hand, and wrong utterances or speech and lies, on the other hand, so that it is clear in the passage cited (fn. 7) where the principle of contradiction is formulated that the focus of the principle is on truth and falsity rather than on rightness or wrongness. When applied to utterances, 'sacca' and 'micchā' mean 'true' and 'false' respectively, unlike 'sammā' and 'musā' which in this application mean 'right' and 'wrong' respectively.

But if, as is argued here, the principle of contradiction is not a formal logical principle, what sort of principle is it? The interpretation which I would like to suggest is that, in keeping with the long tradition of debate which has flourished in India since pre-Buddhistic times, the status of the principle of contradiction can be accounted for by construing it as a rule for discussion.

It is of course obvious that any system of linguistic symbols that communicate information will, qua system, have an informal logic. Only, it cannot be concluded that the early Buddhist texts put forth the principle of contradiction as a rule in informal logic, since they recognized no distinction between formal and informal logic, and since to see oneself as putting forth the latter one must know what counts as the former. But from a later and external

point of view one may describe the concern as 'informal logic'. I would prefer to say that they had, and saw themselves as having, an heuristic principle for debate. It is an heuristic principle in the sense of being a principle of method on the basis of which one can discover things: without it, one cannot find out, discover, or establish anything at all.¹²

When the householder, Upāli, violates this rule (in the example previously quoted), Gotama Buddha perceptively points out the inconsistency of his doing so with his claim to be speaking in accordance with the truth, thus illustrating the considerable importance to be attached to this rule. The consequence of violating the heuristic principle of noncontradiction is that one thereby relinquishes any claim to be saying something that is true.

A different sort of consequence (or putative consequence), one which is mythologically articulated, obtains when the rule is violated that in discussion a legitimate question should be answered at least on its third repetition. The penalty mentioned for this violation is having a thunder-bolt bearing yakkha (identified with Indra) shatter one's skull into seven pieces!¹³ We are told that the same Aggivessana who violated the rule of contradiction almost violates the latter rule about answering as well, barely averting his doom by answering after the second repetition while the fiery thunder-bolt is overhead. In early Buddhism these rules were powerful weapons against ignorance masquerading as knowledge.

Aside from the exegetical line of argument already given for the thesis, contra Jayatilleke, that the early Buddhist principle of contradiction is an heuristic rather than a formal logical one, another line of argument is possible on historical grounds. The exegetical argument shows that in early Buddhism noncontradiction is simply a basic rule for debate, there being here no concern

for propositions and formal logic. The historical point can also be made that there is no evidence of a concern for formal logic and propositions in any school of thought in India at the time of the Buddha.

In his chart on the development of Indian logic, Staal lists the work of Kanada in the first century A.D. as the first to be done on logic in a narrow sense. Staal himself opts for such a broad sense of 'logic', however, (congruent with his sweeping claim: 'the history of Indian logic covers at least 23 centuries...') that the distinctions between logic, grammar, and ritual become blurred.¹⁴ In order that early Buddhism is not seen as having our concerns, it is important to insist that formal logic plays no role in early Buddhism. It may be that what began as an heuristic principle was transformed into a formal logical one with the later developments of Indian thought, but that is outside the scope of this work.

At this point it is appropriate to return to the problem of interpreting the 'both X and not X' part of the four fold logic. In view of the clear occurrence of the heuristic principle of contradiction that I have shown to pertain to utterances, it would be inconsistent if the third part of the often-used four fold formula should turn out to violate that very principle. (It is beside the point that Gotama does not urge acceptance of the third lemma in particular, for if early Buddhism considers a self-contradiction as a possibility, then it is fundamentally mistaken.)

Since it was shown in part I how the literal translation of the four fold logic is senseless, the question arises: is there any non-literal interpretation of the third position that makes sense in the early context? One item of internal evidence supporting the contention that either the third or the fourth position does not

mean what a literal translation conveys is that on a literal rendering they are semantically equivalent. Although the early Buddhist viewpoint does not include a formal logic, the following formal parallel may be constructed in order to demonstrate semantic equivalence. Taking p and $\neg p$ as parallel to the third position and $\neg(p \wedge \neg p)$ as parallel to the fourth position, perhaps:

$$\neg(p \wedge \neg p) \equiv \neg p \wedge \neg \neg p \equiv p \wedge \neg p$$

But if this is the case, then both the third position and the fourth are self-contradictory, and the two self-contradictions are semantically equivalent as nugatory. Yet since the early Buddhist perspective recognizes the two as distinct views, the formal symbolism above cannot be an accurate rendering. Hence, my strategy is to offer an alternative model for understanding the four fold pattern.

To begin with there are some points about the Pali which need to be kept in mind for a clearer view of the matter. There are passages which indicate that the fourth, 'neither...nor', is literally meant as in the Saṃyutta Nikāya lines:¹⁵

- 7 Kim nu kho bho Gotama sayamkatam dukkhanti
Mā hevaṃ Kassapāti Bhagavā avoca
- 8 Kim pana bho Gotama paramkatam dukkhanti
Mā hevaṃ Kassapāti Bhagavā avoca
- 9 Kim nu kho bho Gotama sayamkatañca paramkatañca
dukkhanti
Mā hevaṃ Kassapāti Bhagavā avoca
- 10 Kim pana bho Gotama asayaṃ-kāram aparaṃkāram
adhicca samuppannam dukkhanti
Mā hevaṃ Kassapāti Bhagavā avoca

The Pali Text Society translation of the passage is:¹⁶

- 7 'Now then, Master Gotama, is suffering wrought by one's self?'
Not so verily, Kassapa, said the Exalted One.
- 8 'What then, Master Gotama, is one's suffering wrought by another?'
Not so verily, Kassapa, said the Exalted One.
- 9 'What then, Master Gotama, is suffering wrought both by one's self and by another?'

'Not so verily, Kassapa,' said the Exalted One.

- 10 'What then, Master Gotama, has [the] suffering [which is] wrought neither by myself nor by another, befallen me by chance?'

'Not so verily, Kassapa,' said the Exalted One.

As an aside it should be noted that the phrase 'kim nu kho' in line 9 has been translated in the same way as 'kim pana bho' in lines 8 and 10 due to an oversight. It should be translated as in line 7 to convey the parallelism of the Pali verse. Also, the term 'bho' has a familiar tone (vocative of the formal 'bhavant' meaning 'sir' or 'lord'), and was much used by the brahmans as a form of address for equals or inferiors. Hence they are called 'bhovādins'.¹⁷ The term 'bho' is rendered by the translator as 'Master' in an attempt to approximate the mild condescension or familiarity of 'bho' in this context, and should not be thought of as 'Master' in the sense of teacher. Thirdly, the words 'mā hevam' which report the Buddha's attitude to each part of the four fold above do not indicate a simple denial, but rather a prohibition. 'Do not say so' is thus an appropriate translation, as Kalupahana points out.¹⁸

'Adhicca samuppanam' means 'uncaused, sprung into existence without a cause', so that in the above passage the fourth position represents a rejection of the self-caused/other-caused dichotomy altogether, as the phraseology of 'asayaṃ-kāram' (not self-caused) and 'aparaṃ-kāram' (not other-caused) indicates. Thus, if the fourth position is literally interpreted (e.g., 10 above as referring to 7 and 8), it makes sense as a rejection of the first and second as offering an overly-simple dichotomy. But as previously shown, the third and fourth cannot both be interpreted literally unless the unpalatable consequence of their equivalence is admitted. Consequently the question arises as to whether and

how the third position can be given a non-literal interpretation.

As a starting point recall Jayatilleke's interpretations of two Pali phrases as 'he is semiconscious' and 'the universe is finite (in some dimensions) and infinite (in other dimensions)' presented previously on pages 49 and 57 herein respectively. On this view the third position is a qualified assertion, intermediate between the first and the second, and a tacit convention operates such that statements in the four fold logic of the form 'both X and not X' are elliptical, leaving out 'in part' after each X. On the basis of the preceeding considerations the following scheme may be constructed:

- 1) there exists an X such that characteristic y applies;
- 2) there exists an X such that y does not, but z does, apply;
- 3) there exists an X such that both y and z apply in part
- 4) there exists an X such that neither y nor z apply.

In 10) already mentioned it is 'chance' which is the reason given why a position of type 4) applies. The Buddha is depicted as rejecting attempts to involve him in speculative philosophical arguments, saying that he does not hold any alternative fourth position.¹⁹ And the fourth is explained with reference to one who is 'addicted to logic and reasoning'.²⁰

Since a wide variety of four fold examples occur in Pali, it may not always be easy to see how a given example could admit of the third alternative, which requires distinguishable parts. Some of the examples used are: X understands, X exists, X is pleasing, X expects, in cases where each X has a four fold pattern of possibilities.²¹ Understanding is the sort of thing that one might have in part, and if X is pleasing it need not be completely so. Yet it may be more difficult to see whether and how one can have a 'partial expectation'. (Perhaps one can, as in: 'I rather thought he would come home on time, but was not very surprised when he did not'.) But what of the possibility that X may exist

in part? In context the X is the tathāgata, and it is not absurd to suppose that some non-Buddhist theoreticians thought that perhaps the Buddhist view is that in the case of the tathāgata part of what might generally be called mind (mano) continues to exist, and part does not. Gotama Buddha clearly is shown to reject this view in chastizing Sati for holding that Buddha teaches that viññāna (consciousness) continues after death. I suggest that 3) as applied to the tathāgata may be understood as the view that part of the tathāgata survives death and part does not. If the part which was thought to survive (e. g., viññāna) is taken as a sort of permanent ātman surrogate, then it is obvious why the Buddha would not hold such a view, since the anātmavāda clearly precludes it.

The muddle of regarding the third and fourth positions as self-contradictory and equally meaningless results from taking them as formally symbolized: p , $\sim p$, $p \wedge \sim p$, $\sim(p \wedge \sim p)$. Instead I think they can be understood properly as existential statements viz., there exists an X such that y obtains, there exists an X such that y does not obtain but z obtains, there exists an X such that y obtains (in part) and z obtains (in part), there exists an X such that y neither obtains nor does z obtain.

Although this general schema is not stated in Pali, the instances of the four fold pattern fit this model. For example, dukkha is self-caused, dukkha is not self-caused but other-caused, dukkha is both self caused (in part) and other caused (in part), dukkha is neither self-caused nor other caused (but arises by chance).

Is there any evidence that the four fold pattern is regarded as exhaustive of the possibilities on the questions to which it is applied? For instance, consider this passage from the Dīgha:²²

Ime kho te, bhikkhave, samana-brāhmaṇā amarā-vikkhepikā
 tatha tatha pañham puṭṭhā samānā vācā-vikkhepam apajjanti
 amarā-vikkhepam catuhi vatthūhi. Ye he keci, bhikkave,
 samaṇā vā brahmaṇā vā amarā-vikkhepikā tatha tatha pañham
 puṭṭhā samānā vaca-vikkhepam, apajjanti amara-vikkhepam,
 sabbe te imeh' eva catuhi vatthūhi etesaṃ vā aññatarena,
 n'atthi ito bahiddhā.

T. W. Rhys Davids translates this as:²³

These, brethren, are those recluses and Brahmans who
 wriggle like eels; and who, when a question is put to them
 on this or that, resort to equivocation, to eel-wriggling; and
 that in four ways, or in one or other of the same; there is no
 other way in which they do so.

Here a special concern is the force of 'they do so in these
 four ways...there is no other way in which they do so'. Is this
 a contingent, historical fact that there happened to be four pos-
 itions, or is it more than that -- a rule for discussion to the
 effect that no more than the four possibilities were admissible?
 If interpreted in the latter way, the passage above is evidence
 in favor of Jayatilleke's view that the four fold pattern was taken
 as exhaustive of the possibilities.

It is interesting to notice that the four fold pattern is not
 always applied to debates in early Buddhism, and it might be
 thought that this is something odd or perhaps even inconsistent
 about early Buddhism. I do not think so, for understood as it is
 recommended above, something quite similar happens in contexts
 quite ordinary in which there is no suggestion of an inscrutable
 'Asian logic' at work. A notable example occurs in Hume's
Dialogues, in which Philo lists four hypotheses on the nature
 of first causes:²⁴

that they are endowed with perfect goodness, that they have
 perfect malice, that they are opposite and have both goodness
 and malice, that they have neither goodness nor malice.

Of course no one would suggest that Hume ought always to use this

four fold pattern. Whether it is required depends on the issues under consideration, as in early Buddhism as well.

Whereas Jayatilleke thought the four fold pattern to be a kind of logic superior to Aristotelian logic, I do not think that this comparison is adequate.²⁵ There is nothing in the four fold logic, properly understood, which is either in conflict with, or in advance of, Aristotelian logic.

The main tasks completed are those of clarifying the status of the early Buddhist principle of contradiction, and explaining how it is compatible with the third and fourth positions of the four fold logic. In section I of this chapter the need to undertake these tasks became obvious after discovering various inadequacies in several accounts of the four fold pattern. And now it is appropriate to summarize the main findings of section II:

- (1) in early Buddhism there is a distinction between 'truth of being' and 'truth of utterance';
- (2) 'micchā' is used in the latter sense in the formulation of the principle of noncontradiction;
- (3) there is no word for 'proposition' in early Buddhism, and hence no concern with formal logic as such;
- (4) thus, contra Jayatilleke, there is no formal logical principle of contradiction in early Buddhism, but rather a heuristic principle or rule for conducting discussions which makes self-contradictory utterances illicit. If one calls it informal logic, that is only from an external point of view.
- (5) the four fold logic is best understood as having the general form: 1) there exists an X such that characteristic y applies to it, 2) there exists an X such that y does not apply but z applies, 3) there exists an X such that y applies (in part) and z applies (in part), 4) there exists an X such that neither y nor z apply.
- (6) on this account the third position of the four fold logic does not violate the heuristic principle of contradiction, and thus there is no internal inconsistency here;
- (7) finally, the two views that Buddhism has an entirely different kind of logic from Western logic and that Buddhism is fundamentally confused in admitting self-contradictions as valid are both exposed as inapplicable to early Buddhism. Thus, the possibility of understanding early Buddhism by such appeals.

Throughout I have been concerned to look at early Buddhism in its own terms. When looked at in its own terms, one sees neither fundamental confusion and cause for despair (Poussin: 'We are helpless'), nor a modern system of logic constructed in antiquity (Jayatilleke: 'the early Buddhist conception of logic was far in advance of its time').²⁶ In general a moral to be drawn is that in understanding an ancient world-view, as in understanding a primitive society, it is not necessary that the others be seen as having precisely our concerns in order to be saying or doing something significant.

Notes: Chapter 2, II

¹I. B. Horner, Middle Length Sayings vol. I, Pali Text Society (London, Luzac & Co., 1967), p. 285.

²T. W. Rhys Davids and Wm. Stede, The Pali Text Society's Pali - English Dictionary (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 677-678.

³Ibid., p. 317.

⁴Horner, op. cit. vol. II, p. 43.

⁵Rhys Davids and Stede, op. cit., p. 668.

⁶The claim is that behavior is the criterion for identifying the states of consciousness of others, not that states of consciousness are identical with behavior.

⁷C. A. F. Rhys Davids, The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Samyutta Nikaya), (London, Pali Text Society), p. 270.

⁸Lord Chalmers, Buddha's Teachings being the Sutta-Nipatā or Discourse-Collection (Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1932), Harvard Oriental Series, C. R. Lanman (ed.), pp. 102-103; 196-197.

⁹V. Trenckner (ed.), Majjhima Nikāya vol. I, Pali Text Society (London, Luzac & Co., 1964), p. 402.

¹⁰K. N. Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge (London, Allen & Unwin, 1963), p. 334.

¹¹Cf. Trenckner, op. cit., p. 402 for the Pali with the translation in Horner, op. cit. vol. II, p. 71.

¹²Vide: A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary vol. II, H - N (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976). A relevant sense of 'heuristic' here is B 1 b as 'a rule or item of information used in such a process' of decision-making.

- ¹³Horner, op. cit. vol. I, p. 285.
- ¹⁴J. F. Staal, 'Indian Logic' section of 'Logic, History of' in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (New York, Macmillan, 1967) vol. 4, pp. 520-523.
- ¹⁵C. A. F. Rhys Davids, op. cit. vol. II, pp. 19-20.
- ¹⁶Ibid., vol. II, p. 15.
- ¹⁷Rhys Davids & Stede, op. cit., p. 509.
- ¹⁸Vide David J. Kalupahana, Causality: the Central Philosophy of Buddhism (Honolulu, University Press of Hawaii, 1975), p. 143.
- ¹⁹E.g., consider Horner, op. cit. vol. II, p. 177.
- ²⁰T. W. Rhys Davids, Dialogues of the Buddha in F. Max Mueller (ed.), Sacred Books of the Buddhists series, vol. II part I (Dīgha Nikāya trans.), Oxford University Press, p. 36.
- ²¹Horner, op. cit. vol. I, p. 246; vol. II, p. 97; vol. II, pp. 177-178; vol. III, pp. 184-185.
- ²²T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, Dīgha Nikāya (London, Pali Text Society, 1890), vol. I, p. 126.
- ²³T. W. Rhys Davids in Mueller, op. cit. vol. II, p. 46.
- ²⁴Norman Kemp Smith, Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (London, Nelson & Sons, 2nd ed., 1947), p. 212.
- ²⁵K. N. Jayatilleke, The Message of the Buddha ed. by Ninian Smart (London, Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp. 49 and 51.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 51; Poussin cited in Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 333.

Chapter 3: Rationality and Pessimism -- Fact, Value, and Dukkha

Aside from the challenge to early Buddhism on the grounds of fundamental unintelligibility which was examined in Chapter 2, another sort of objection comes from those who regard it as wholly pessimistic and in that way 'irrational'. Commenting on this sort of objection E. J. Thomas writes:¹

It is not more pessimistic than other religions that have called life a vale of tears, and it is definitely optimistic in teaching that the cause of pain can be known, and that there is a way by which it can be removed. But in being pessimistic it is consistently so, and it requires that one who really knows that existence is pain shall devote all his efforts to stopping it, that is, to understand what the cause is, and then to remove himself from all contact with it. The ordinary man does not believe that existence is pain. Even when he despairs about ever attaining pleasurable ends, he is still under the impulse, the thirst for pleasure. Evidently such a one is incapable of admitting or understanding even the first Truth. He can only come to realize the Truths by a course of moral and intellectual training.

The answer to the charge of pessimism can only be given after some account of the meaning of dukkha and of the claim 'all is dukkha' have been presented. Then after dealing with the problem of whether or not early Buddhism is 'pessimistic', I propose to examine the issue of whether in this context there is some sort of illicit shift from the descriptive claim 'all is dukkha' to the (explicit or implicit) claim 'one should eliminate dukkha by following the early Buddhist path'. This resolves into: (a) is there such a shift at all in early Buddhism? (b) is making the fact/value shift mistaken from a philosophical point of view?

The texts say that, unlike the ten questions (containing the four fold logic as applied to the tathāgata) which have not been 'determined' ('abyākata' or 'avyākata') by Buddha, dukkha has

been determined by him.² What is dukkha?

To begin, it is noteworthy that the five aggregates which constitute personality are impermanent, and that whatever is impermanent is dukkha.³ And one finds statements like 'formerly as well as now all these material shapes are impermanent, painful, liable to alteration.'⁴ While not being synonymous with 'impermanence' ('anicca'), dukkha thus has descriptive import (a) by virtue of the fact of change in the world. And as the following passage bears out, it also has descriptive import (b) in reference to a range of experience which is minimally that of deprivation, and which may be that of mental and/or physical pain of various sorts:⁵

Katamaññ c' āvuso, dukkhañ ariyasaccaṃ? — Jāti pi dukkhā, jarā pi dukkhā, maraṇam pi dukkhañ, sokaparideva-
dukkhadomanassupāyāsā pi dukkhā. Yam p' icchaṃ na labhati, tam pi dukkhañ saṃkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā.

A translation by I. B. Horner goes:⁶

And what, your reverences, is the ariyan truth of anguish? Birth is anguish and ageing is anguish and dying is anguish; and grief, sorrow, suffering, misery and despair are anguish. And not getting what one desires, that too is anguish. In brief, the five groups of grasping are anguish.

Here 'dukkha' is translated by Horner as 'suffering' in its occurrence in the long and much used phrase beginning with 'soka' ('grief'), while it is translated as 'anguish' in the other occurrences here. The passage characterizes dukkha in the primary sense in which it functions in the first noble truth in terms of several other concepts, among which dukkha occurs again (consider the primary sense as dukkha₁ and the other as dukkha₂). Apparently dukkha₁ is not semantically equivalent to dukkha₂, for otherwise the characterization would be at that point tautologous. Although it is disputable whether the former should be rendered as 'anguish'

and the latter as 'suffering', Horner has seen the importance of assigning different meanings to them. T. W. Rhys Davids and Wm. Stede think that dukkha is 'to be understood as physical pain' in the combination of this term and domanassa, and render the 'soka phrase' as 'grief and sorrow, afflictions of pain & misery, i. e. all kinds of misery'.⁷ However one interprets the precise meaning of dukkha₂, the important point to note is that the above passage shows that dukkha₁ has the much wider meaning indicated at (b) above.

One of the 'eighteen mental ranges' that a monk might achieve concerns dukkha. In achieving this mental range a monk, 'ranges over the mental state that gives rise to sorrow.'⁸ The mental state which gives rise to sorrow is described elsewhere as the 'root of dukkha' which, when uprooted, rebirth ceases.⁹ From the early Buddhist point of view this root is craving (taṇhā), a phenomenon which is, in theory at least, checkable not only for one's self but for others as well, by anyone who, through meditation, masters the abhiññā which enables him to know the mind of another (telepathy, cetopariyaññā) and 'see' the other's rebirth cycle through dibbacakkhu ('divine eye'). And in one's own case the abhiññā of 'retro cognition' (pubbenivāsânussatiññā) of one's past lives is relevant.

Since in early Buddhism it is a principle of the way things are, that beings 'yearn for happiness and recoil from pain' (dukkha₂), it is appropriate to ask: where, if at all, does evaluation come into the picture? Is dukkha in any way an evaluative concept? Consider how, in its more inclusive sense (dukkha₁), it is a characteristic of the profane saṃsāra in contrast to the 'no arising' and 'no falling' characteristics of the sacred nibbāna.¹⁰ For dukkha is so by virtue of impermanence, and the cessation

of dukkha (nibbāna) is not characterized by impermanence:¹¹

atthi bhikkhave tad āyatanam yattha n' eva pathavi
na āpo na tejo na vāyo na ākāśaṃ āyatanam na viññāna-
nañcāyatanam na ākiñcaṇṇāyatanam na nevasaññānāsaññā-
yatanam n' āyam loko na paraloko ubho candimasūriyā, tad
amham bhikkhave n' eva āgatim vadāmi na gatim na thitim
na cutim na upapattim appatittham appavattam anārammaṇam
eva taṃ, es' ev' anto dukkhassā 'ti. . . .

atthi bhikkhave ajātam abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṃkhatam, no
ce taṃ bhikkhave abhaviṣṣa ajātam abhūtaṃ akataṃ asan-
khatam, na yidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa sankhatassa nis-
saraṇam paññāyetha. yasmā ca kho bhikkhave atthi ajātam
abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṃkhatam tasmā jātassa bhūtassa katassa
saṃkhatassa nissaraṇam paññāyatī 'ti.

F. L. Woodward translates these Udāna passages as:¹²

Monks, there exists that condition wherein is neither
earth nor water nor fire nor air: wherein is neither the
sphere of infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of
nothingness nor of neither-consciousness-nor unconscious-
ness; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond
nor both together nor moon and sun. Thence, monks, I
declare is no coming to birth; thither is no going (from life);
therein is no duration; thence is no falling; there is no
arising. It is not something fixed, it moves not on, it is not
based on anything. That indeed is the end of Ill. . . .

Monks, there is a not-born, a not-become, a not-made,
a not-compounded. Monks, if that unborn, not-become, not-
made, not-compounded were not, there would be apparent
no escape from this here that is born, become, made, com-
pounded.

The second Pali passage here (after the elipsis) shows well
the contrast between the sacred and the profane in the early
Buddhist texts.¹³ And it is interesting to notice that in the pre-
ceding Pali passage quoted just now 'the end of Ill' (dukkha) is
characterized as neither arising nor falling, yet it is not charac-
terized as 'something fixed' ('thita'), nor alternatively as moving
(above: 'na gatim na thitim'). Nibbāna eludes conventional cate-
gories of experience and cannot, for example, be characterized

as permanent by way of simple contrast with samsāra which is impermanent. This same point holds if one adopts the translation of 'thita' as 'eternal'. The view of early Buddhism is not that nibbāna is permanent, but that duration does not apply to it. Nibbāna is sometimes characterized in positive terms as 'the highest bliss' ('paramam sukham'), and if it were characterized only by a via negativa, then it would be questionable whether the word marks a concept.¹⁴

T. W. Rhys Davids translates 'dukkhassa pariññā' as 'the complete understanding of sorrow', which brings out the fact that this is no ordinary garden variety of knowledge, as do phrases like 'he knows as it really is: "this is pain"'.¹⁵ Yathā bhūtam, 'as it really is', functions as an important qualifying phrase in that it brings into focus the descriptive-cum-evaluative aspect of the 'knowledge' of dukkha. There is an implicit contrast in any such talk of 'what is' with 'what seems to be', and in this context the implicit contrast is between the Buddhist (who knows dukkha as it really is) and the non-Buddhist (who does not understand dukkha in its more inclusive sense as dukkha₁ to apply to everything). E. J. Thomas says: 'the ordinary man does not believe that existence is pain', perhaps referring to dukkha₁.¹⁶ The generalized ordinary view is that there are painful feelings of various sorts but not that 'all is dukkha₁'.

'Agha' (as in 'aghamūlam' or 'root of pain' at Samyutta Nikāya III, 32, 10) means 'sin, error; evil, misery, distress, pain, adversity' according to Trenckner, who notes that 'agha' is sometimes equivalent to 'dukkha' and sometimes not.¹⁷ And on 'agha' the Pali Text Society dictionary says: 'the primary meaning is darkness'.¹⁸ Congruently it is also said that 'agha' means 'the sky' considered as a dark empty void. Dukkha, however, does

not have this latter meaning, and when the two terms are used synonymously this meaning of void or sky thus drops out. For example, at Saṃyutta Nikāya vol. 3, XXII, sec. 31, agha is used synonymously with dukkha, which had just occurred in sec. 12. There in sec. 12 it is said that the five aggregates are dukkha and in sec. 31 that the five aggregates are agha. As Childers has observed, the terms mean the same here, and I suspect that both were purposely used in order to eliminate any loophole by means of which the Buddha might be incorrectly interpreted as having left open the possibility that in some sense or other suffering is not to be ascribed to the five aggregates.

It is also said that suffering is causally associated with saddhā.¹⁹ On the best interpretation this means that suffering is a necessary condition for confidence in the doctrine to arise. In this sense suffering gives rise to confidence: if it meant something stronger to the effect that every being who suffered would consequently have confidence in the dhamma, then it would be false. For there are of course a wide variety of responses to suffering, of which the Buddhist response is one. It should be noted that 'confidence' is used as a translation of 'saddhā' rather than 'faith' above, but the complex issue of the uses of saddhā requires treatment in a separate chapter.

It is clear that dukkha can be physical or mental pain as well as a more inclusive sort of 'unease' (as in the first ariyasacca or 'noble truth'). The PTS dictionary distinguishes fine gradations in the meaning of the term, and on the relationship between sukha and dukkha says:²⁰

Sukha & dukkha are ease and dis-ease (but we use disease in another sense); or wealth and ilth from well & ill (but we have now lost ilth); or well-being and ill-ness (but illness means something else in English). We are forced, therefore,

in translation to use half synonyms, no one of which is exact. Dukkha is equally mental & physical. Pain is too predominately physical, sorrow too exclusively mental, but in some connections they have to be used in default of any more exact rendering. Discomfort, suffering, ill, and trouble can occasionally be used in certain connections. Misery, distress, agony, affliction and woe are never right. They are much too strong & are only mental...'.²¹

Sukha and dukkha occur, for instance, in the set of the 'six elements':²¹

Cha-y-imā, Ānanda, dhātuyo: Sukhadhātu, dukkhadhātu, somanassadhātu, domanassadhātu, upekkhādhātu, avijjādhātu. Imā kho, Ānanda, cha dhātuyo yato jānāti passati, ettāvatā pi kho, Ānanda, dhātukusalo bhikkhūti alaṃ vacanāyāti.

This is translated by Horner as:²²

There are six elements, Ananda: the element of happiness, the element of anguish, the element of gladness, the element of sorrowing, the element of equanimity, the element of ignorance. When, Ananda, he knows and sees these six elements, it is at this stage that it suffices to say, 'The monk is skilled in the elements'.

T. W. Rhys Davids and Wm. Stede, in making their above quoted comment that certain words are 'too strong' to render dukkha when it occurs in combination with sukha, have made a point which also applies to 'anguish' in Horner's translation. But another of their points, that 'agony' is 'only mental' is dubious.

Now I want to clarify how one might arrive at 'all is dukkha'₁ in early Buddhism. The five aggregates mentioned previously as elements of personality are also, in conjunction with the respective faculties, constitutive of the universe. The Sabbasutta points this out:²³

Monks, I will teach you 'everything'. Listen to it. What, monks, is 'everything'? Eye and material form, ear and sound, nose and odor, tongue and taste, body and tangible objects, mind and mental objects. These are called 'everything'. Monks, he who would say: "I will reject this everything and proclaim another everything," he may certainly

have a theory [of his own]. But when questioned, he would not be able to answer and would, moreover, be subject to vexation. Why? Because it would not be within the range of experience (avisaya).

Since on the early Buddhist view the five aggregates and the corresponding faculties are all dukkha₁, and since the Sabbasutta shows the five aggregates and the respective faculties as comprising the universe, it follows that 'all is dukkha₁' on the early Buddhist view. The premises and conclusion of this argument are all from early Buddhism of course, but the way of organizing the material as a concise argument is a philosophical reconstruction of a helpful sort. It enables one to see what the logical relationship between these ideas may be taken as, without distorting them, from a Western perspective. And from the preceding determination that dukkha₁ is a descriptive-cum-evaluative concept, it is clear that the claim 'all is dukkha₁' is partly an evaluative claim. This is a significant conclusion, because it might be thought that the concept and the claim are entirely descriptive in view of the linkage between dukkha and impermanence in the early texts. This, however, would be to overlook the role of the concept of dukkha in the evaluational contrast between the sacred and the profane. Few concepts are more fitting candidates to support Ninian Smart's claim that 'worldviews' have 'existential force' and make 'descriptive claims'.²⁴ By contrast, many other religious concepts (e.g., ātman taken as unperceivable entity) are so far from possible experiential check that it does not make sense to regard them as descriptive concepts at all.

From the vantage point of the present discussion, then, what can be said about 'Buddhist pessimism'? Buddhism might be charged with being pessimistic either because it suggests a conception of the final goal on which consciousness (viññāna) ceases

to exist in parinibbāna (to be discussed in Chapter 6), or because it asserts that 'all is dukkha'.¹ On the first point, there is no need to value 'endless life' in itself and without further qualification as particularly valuable, and on the other hand to 'value extinction' is not necessarily to look on the dark side of things, as recent writing on the tedium of immortality suggests.²⁵ What it means to 'value extinction' differs in different contexts, and in early Buddhism it would not mean advocating suicide, for that action based on desire results in rebirth (kamma based on taṇha produces punabbhava). And as for the second point, seen in the context the claim 'all is dukkha'¹ is such that liberation is nevertheless possible for those who aspire to it, so that in the final analysis there is no pessimism.

But neither of these replies will allay all doubts about the matter, and an inquiry into what is meant by 'pessimism' is necessary. It is important to distinguish between descriptive and evaluative senses of the term without, however, supposing that the usages of it must in practice fall into one or the other category. In early Buddhism there are descriptive and evaluative features of the concept of dukkha, but not mutually exclusive descriptive and evaluative types of usage.

One attempt at a descriptive definition of 'pessimism', neither honorific nor perjorative, is given by W. D. Niven along the lines that:²⁶

In brief, Pessimism holds that existence itself is evil, that non-existence is preferable to existence, that the root of all evil is the desire for existence.

But this way of characterizing the matter is unfortunately open to two fatal objections. First of all, in making 'pessimism' simply a matter of holding certain propositions rather than in part, at least, exhibiting a certain sort of attitude, many actual

cases of pessimism are ruled out. Individuals do not need to entertain general views of the sort which Niven puts forth in order to react to life in ways which make us justified in describing them as 'pessimistic'. Similarly Stewart R. Sutherland points out that atheism is not necessarily a matter of denying the proposition 'God exists', contrary to what some text-book definitions would have one believe, and that it may be expressed in much more subtle and interesting ways.²⁷

Secondly, in tying the concept of pessimism to that of evil the variety of the phenomena of pessimism, already restricted by a strictly propositional treatment, becomes further restricted in that many of those who would ordinarily be described as pessimists do not use theological-sounding talk about 'evil' at all. And in early Buddhism the world is not, nor is existence, evil -- but it is dukkha. In early Buddhist mythology, Māra, the personification of evil, tempts one to craving and grasping and hence to experience rebirth, and yet it is Mara who is evil rather than the world or existence as such.

According to another definition 'pessimism' is a 'dissatisfaction with life' which is embodied in various philosophical formulations.²⁸ It would, however, be too loose to speak of early Buddhism as being in this sense pessimistic. For the mature view of the Buddhist disciple after reaching the meditative stage of the fourth jhāna is not at all to be dissatisfied but, on the contrary, to have attained a state of equanimity incompatible with a grasping attitude of dissatisfaction. Thus experiences which usually cause dissatisfaction in worldly people do not disturb the meditating Buddhist. It is of course necessary for one to become dissatisfied with ordinary life in order to be in a position to appreciate the attraction of the Buddhist path, but this 'dissatis-

faction' is with ordinary life, not with life per se (both suicide and asceticism being 'condemned'), and holds only in the lower stages of the path.

It is interesting to see what company the word 'pessimism' keeps. As an instance of this 'ism' Schopenhauer's views are explained in the following way:²⁹

The ultimate reality of the universe appears only in will — in any blind force of nature and in all organic existence — an endless striving without intelligence or aim. The radical evil of life — the will to live — is to be eradicated by the denial of the "principle of individuation" and by the perfect denial of the will to live by means of asceticism, by destroying illusions of pleasure, by charity, by absolute refusal of the sexual impulse, and by total abstinence from food.

Notice that although early Buddhism and this account of Schopenhauer's thought (the correctness of which in detail it is beyond our scope to examine) both share a 'dissatisfaction with life', they employ very different ways of stating the dissatisfaction and offer different ways of reacting to it. In the one case it is dukkha -- not evil -- that is taken to be the basic problem, and no such extreme of 'total abstinence from food' is regarded as a profitable (kusala) reaction to the unsatisfactoriness of things.

Consider another case:³⁰

The most thorough and uncompromising of the advocates of pessimism is Julius Friedrich August Bahnsen (d. 1881). He maintains that the world and life are not only essentially irrational and wretched, but will be eternally so; that his fellow pessimists have no right to promise that the agony of creation will ever terminate; that the hope of the extinction of evil in a world essentially evil is an unreasonable hope, and can be based only on blind faith. . . .

Here again, although both the early Buddhist in the lower stages of training and Bahnsen have a 'dissatisfaction with life' and are in that sense both 'pessimistic', to say this and no more

would be to conceal a great deal. For the early Buddhist view emphatically would reject several points which fill out in what ways Bahansen regards life as unsatisfactory. The world is not 'essentially irrational' on the early Buddhist view, but a flux of causally related events, the pattern of which is intelligible. And while unwilling to speak of the world as a creation of Issara (Skt. Īśvara), the early Buddhist perspective does take it that there is an end possible for a person's unease, by following the path. Finally this ray of hope is not just 'blind faith' that dukkha will cease, but is to some extent based on meditational achievements.

What attention to cases such as these shows is that the attempt to link up various views as being 'pessimistic' may easily conceal important differences. For in filling out the reasons for, and emotive reactions to, what is regarded as unsatisfactory, significant differences are to be found. And in early Buddhism the world is ordered causally (in terms of paticca samuppāda), not the chaotic mess many pessimists take it to be, and liberation (nibbāna) is possible in one's own lifetime. 'Pessimism' is a loose term, but insofar as it involves belief that the world is chaos and that the best one can do is suicide, it is clearly inapplicable to early Buddhism. In general, it is at the very least misleading in this application. Nevertheless, some religionists and Buddhist scholars apparently cannot restrain themselves from lapsing into vague mention of 'Buddhist pessimism'.

An important philosophical question is one about fact/value here. Is there an illicit shift from a descriptive claim to the effect that 'all is dukkha₁' to an evaluative claim (whether explicit or implicit) that 'one should eliminate dukkha₁ in achieving nibbāna through the path'? In his well-known two-volume historical work,

Indian Philosophy, Radhakrishnan says: 'The aim of Buddhism is not philosophical explanation but scientific description.'³¹ If Radhakrishnana is right here, how do values enter into the picture? It is commonly accepted that science, qua science, articulates how the world is rather than how it ought to be. Is one to say, then, that the statement 'all is dukkha'₁ is on the same level as a statement like 'everything is composed of atoms'?

It might be argued that the answer is 'yes', for dukkha is explained by reference to the idea that everything is impermanent (anicca), which may be viewed as a descriptive claim. The difficulty is that it plays more roles than a merely descriptive claim could, and hence cannot be rightly regarded as on the same level as 'everything is composed of atoms'. For it also has a religious sense: everything is impermanent applies to saṅkhārā, compounded things, but not of course to nibbāna which is highly evaluated by contrast. The religious implication to be drawn from the description is to avoid attachment to things in view of their fluctuating nature of composition and dissolution.

There is a noteworthy controversy over whether an 'ought claim' can be derived from a set of 'is claims'. The impossibility of this exercise has been a dogma of modern philosophy, one based on a famous passage by Hume.³² In recent literature, Max Black challenges this dogma,³³ and D. Z. Phillips counters Black.³⁴ I have suggested, however, that the claim 'all is dukkha'₁ is descriptive-cum-evaluative. And on this view, the question of a fact - value shift cannot arise concerning the early Buddhist claim.

Yet it might nevertheless be objected that there being no is - ought shift makes it all the worse for early Buddhism, since in that case the claim 'all is dukkha'₁ is a confused one indiscrim-

inately combining factual and evaluational elements. It might be argued that the very concept of dukkha is confused.

In reply examples can be given of concepts in other religious systems or in 'ordinary language' in which a similar combination of factual and evaluative elements obtains. For instance, in Christianity life is sometimes described as a 'vale of tears', a conception which contains both elements. The implicit contrast with heaven indicates description-cum-evaluation. As in early Buddhism the sacred and the profane are delineated, with nibbāna receiving the positive evaluation in contrast to the dukkha that is samsāra.

To say of a man: 'he is the king's loyal servant' is, to take another example, not just to make a descriptive point about a state of affairs, but is in some contexts to evaluate positively his being so. But saying this might make the man an object of derision in other contexts, calling forth a negative evaluation, but in either sort of case the concept of 'loyal servant' is both descriptive and evaluative. The above examples function as a reductio ad absurdum against the view that dukkha is a conceptual confusion: if the concept of dukkha is confused because of combining fact and value, then so are many other useful concepts.

Overall it may be asked: has early Buddhism dealt well with the problem of suffering? The suffering of those who are in this life innocent is difficult for many religions to explain. Consider for a moment Job, who questions the suffering befallen him, blameless, and is answered:³⁵

Dost thou know the order of heaven, and canst thou set down
reason thereof on the earth?

and challenged:³⁶

Wilt thou make void my judgment: and condemn me, that
thou mayst be justified?

but not intellectually satisfied, as Widengren observes:³⁷

The problem thus gets no theoretical solution, only a practical: man is commended resignation to the inscrutable will and majesty of God.

The early Buddhist position, on the other hand, has at least this much in its favor: it offers an explanation of suffering (but not a scientific one), how it arises and how it can be eliminated.

Immediately after Radhakrishnan's statement that Buddhism does not attempt 'philosophical explanation but scientific description' he continues:³⁸

So Buddha answers the question of the cause of any given state of a thing by describing to us the conditions of its coming about, even in the spirit of modern science.

But just because the Buddha gives a causal explanation it does not follow that he is eo ipso engaged in a scientific enterprise. The difficulty with Radhakrishnan's account here is that it falls heir to the erroneous notion that all causal explanation is scientific explanation. Science explains by working with hypothesis and test, and proceeds toward the construction of general theories. Like the Buddhist causal formulas, scientific hypotheses attempt to explain rather than simply to describe.³⁹ But early Buddhism, unlike science, does not modify its views by taking into account the results of a test. Nor does it offer an hypothesis as a first step toward a theory which gives a rationally more comprehensive and better grounded explanation. Seeing the early Buddhist way is regarded as seeing 'yathā bhūtaṃ', or 'as it really is', and not in some provisional way.

Thus, 'all is dukkha'₁ is not on the same level as 'everything is composed of atoms', say; neither is it a philosophical 'speculation' ('diṭṭhi') which is up for argument and counter-argument, 'wordy warfare' being condemned in early Buddhism. Here, as in

many philosophical confusions, the problem consists in seeing too few alternatives: because early Buddhism is not a religion like many others in that it does not accept the concept of God or of the soul, it is tempting to say that it must be either science or philosophy. But if we just 'look and see' without this preconceived 'must' (as Wittgenstein for one urged), early Buddhism presents itself as a very interesting case which widens our conceptual horizons as to what counts as religion.⁴⁰

Notes: Ch. 3

¹E. J. Thomas, History of Buddhist Thought (London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1971 edition).

²T. W. Rhys Davids, Dialogues of the Buddha vol. II, part I, Oxford University Press, p. 255.

³I. B. Horner, The Middle Length Sayings vol. III, London, 1967, p. 329.

⁴Ibid., p. 266.

⁵Majjhima Nikāya vol. III, ed. by R. Chalmers, London, 1960, p. 249.

⁶Horner, op. cit., p. 287.

⁷T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, The Pali Text Society's Pali English Dictionary (London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 325.

⁸Horner, op. cit., p. 287.

⁹Rhys Davids, op. cit., vol. III, part II, p. 97.

¹⁰While nibbāna may be considered under the rubric of the sacred, parinibbāna by contrast is not part of 'religious life' but its limit (see Ch. 6). Hence, if sacred/profane are taken as characterizing types of life (as in Eliade, 1958, p. 1), then 'sacred' cannot be indiscriminately applied to all senses of nibbāna since it is inapplicable to parinibbāna. And it is arguable that there is no Pali distinction matching Durkheim's sacred/profane (Gombrich, 1971, pp. 155-6). Nevertheless, with these qualifications in mind I think that sacred/profane is useful above in indicating the implicit evaluation made in early Buddhism.

¹¹Udāna ed. by P. Steinthal, London, Pali Text Society, 1948, Pāṭaligāma, VIII, i and iii.

¹² F. L. Woodward (trans.), The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon II, London, Sacred Books of the Buddhists Series, pp. 97-98.

¹³ The passage indicates that there is a way out of the predicament of dukkha, one which can be achieved in life, nibbāna.

¹⁴ Majjhima Nikāya I 508.

¹⁵ T. W. Rhys Davids, op. cit., vol. II part I, pp. 192 and 203.

¹⁶ Thomas, op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁷ V. Trenckner, A Critical Pali Dictionary (London, vol. I, p. 24.

¹⁸ Rhys Davids and Stede, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁹ Samyutta Nikāya vol. 2, XII, 23, 15.

²⁰ Rhys Davids and Stede, op. cit., p. 324.

²¹ Majjhima Nikāya vol. III, p. 62.

²² Horner, op. cit., vol. III, p. 106.

²³ David J. Kalupahana, Buddhist Philosophy (Honolulu, 1976), p. 158.

²⁴ Ninian Smart, 'Religion, Philosophy & the Future' in Encounter (London, March 1978), p. 54.

²⁵ Bernard Williams, 'The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality' in John Donnelly (ed.), Language, Metaphysics, and Death (New York, Fordham University Press, 1978), pp. 228-242.

- 26 Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1913), vol. VI, p. 321.
- 27 Stewart R. Sutherland, Atheism and the Rejection of God (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1977).
- 28 The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New York, Funk and Wagnals, 1910), vol. 8, p. 475.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., p. 476.
- 31 S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy (London, 1929), vol. I, p. 372.
- 32 David Hume, Treatise III, i, I.
- 33 Max Black, 'The gap between "is" and "should"' in William Hudson, The Is-Ought Question (London, Macmillan, 1969), p. 99.
- 34 Ibid., p. 111 and 115.
- 35 The Book of Job ch. XXXVII, v. 33.
- 36 Ibid., ch. XL, v. 3.
- 37 C. J. Bleeker and G. Widengren (eds.), Historia Religionum (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1969), vol. I, p. 309.
- 38 Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 372.
- 39 Explanations do not have to be of the same type.
- 40 And this contrasts markedly with Hudson's 'god essentialism' in A Philosophical Approach to Religion (Macmillan, 1974), p. 188.

Chapter 4, I: Mind and Rebirth

When mind is seen, as it often is in pre-twentieth century philosophy, as a 'something', it is ordinarily viewed either as entity or as process. In reacting against the Hinduistic substantive view of self as a kind of entity characterized for one thing as permanent, the early Buddhist view opts for the latter, process conception of mind. There is rebirth (punabbhava, lit. re-becoming), for which the three conditions of union, timing, and the presence of a gandhabba are essential,¹ but this is not to say that there is a permanent blissful center of consciousness (atta, Skt. ātman) which transmigrates. Much confusion may result from the failure to distinguish between 'rebirth' (as an early Buddhist concept) and 'transmigration' (as a Hindu concept), and I shall use these terms to mark the distinction. This is very important, for the idea of ātman is inconsistent with the first two of the three marks of existence,² is baseless from the point of view of Buddhist meditational experience, and, in short, plays no role in the world view of early Buddhism.

One misconception about early Buddhism is that it can (logically) make no sense if it is taken as saying what it really does say about rebirth. Since there can be no rebirth without a thing that is reborn, it is sometimes argued, rebirth (punabbhava) and no-soul (anatta) are logically inconsistent. The assumption here is problematic, for there is a 'rebirth link' in early Buddhism, a topic explored in section II of this chapter.

To begin, consider the relationship between viññāna and mano as treated at Mājjhima Nikāya I 53:

cha-y-ime āvuso viññāṇakāyā: cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ sotavīññāṇaṃ
ghānavīññāṇaṃ jivhāvīññāṇaṃ kāyavīññāṇaṃ manovīññāṇaṃ.

This has been translated by Horner at Middle Length Sayings I 67:

Your reversences there are six classes of consciousness: visual consciousness, auditory consciousness, olfactory consciousness, gustatory consciousness, bodily consciousness, mental consciousness.

Here the relationship between viññāṇa and mano is one of genus to species. Mano is a type of viññāṇa, the part of a person's awareness which has to do with thinking. Elsewhere at MN I 181 it is pointed out that the monk guards the manindriyaṃ, the faculty of mano which, if not guarded, will ensnare him.

Since mano is a type of viññāṇa, and since it is clear from MN I 256 that viññāṇa is not a permanent thing independent of conditions for its existence, it follows that mano is not either. Of course this is not to deny continuity among a number of successive lives, for as the condemnation of speculation about one's lives in past, future, and present shows,³ and as K. N. Jayatilleke has pointed out, continuity was not denied. It is tempting to ask: continuity of what? -- to which the early Buddhist reply is: continuity of the stream of consciousness. The continuity of life depends not only on the physical factors of union and season, but also on the presence of the gandhabba.⁴

Mahathera D. Piyananda says in his dissertation (unpublished, Catholic University of America):⁵

If viññāṇa is unavailable to the fertilized ovum, the ovum dies. The viññāṇa which is ready to enter the ovum is called gandhabba (Skt. gantavya), or one who is ready to go.

He further points out in a footnote that there are two usages of gandhabba, the one just given and another (derived from gandharva) which means 'celestial musician' or 'divine physician'.

But the claim that if viññāṇa is unavailable to the fertilized ovum, then the ovum dies, is objectionable on two counts. First,

the Buddha is not depicted as making this claim, but rather differently as claiming that the presence of the gandhabba is one of the three conditions which are necessary for conception.⁶ Presumably, then, if there is a fertilized ovum, then the gandhabba was already present and thus the question of its unavailability does not arise. On textual grounds, therefore, Piyananda's interpretation here is unsound. Secondly, ex hypothesi, it is not clear why the being would die rather than be born mindless.

As for the condemnation of speculation concerning past, future, and present (the Pali order) just mentioned, it should not be supposed that knowledge of at least the past states is impossible. For at MN I 182 (trans. MLS I 228-9) it is noted that one characteristic mark or 'footprint' of the tathāgata is that 'he remembers divers former habitations in all their modes and detail'.

It is interesting to note that knowledge of the future is not claimed here as a mark of the tathāgata. It is true that the Buddha is reported to have once made such a prediction, however, in the case of Devadatta -- that he would be reborn in niraya, the low rebirth state of torment. The Devadatta case might be an interpolation, since it does not square with the usual avoidance of claiming knowledge of the future. This, obviously, is speculative.⁷

As far as the relationship between mano and viññāna is concerned, there is also a distinction between the elements of mind (manodhātu) or ideas, and consciousness of ideas (manoviññāna-dhātu), e.g. at MN III 62. In between these two dhātu is listed dhammadhātu, which is translated as 'the element of mental states' (MLS I 105). Thus one has: 'the element of mind, the element of mental states, the element of mental consciousness', according to Horner. This translation leaves open the problem of how the second and third terms differ. Alternatively, I submit that the

most straightforward translation of dhammadhātu makes the most sense here -- 'element of things' -- so that one has: 'the element of mind, the element of things, the element of intellect'. Put a bit more broadly this means: subject, object, and cognitive consciousness as the relation between them.

It is noteworthy that if one follows Horner's translation on this point, then mind, if different from mental states, would have to be some sort of organ or substance. Differently, too, at MN III 265-6 Horner translates manam manoviññāṇam manoviññāṇa-viññātabbe dhamme or 'the mind, mental consciousness', translating 'dhamme' as 'things', in line with the above suggestion.

There are passages which seem to support a view of mind as distinct from mental states, however. For example, it is said that the union of mind (mano), things (dhamma), and cognitive consciousness (manoviññāṇa) is contact: tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso (MN I 112). Cognitive consciousness is seen not as a by-product of the union of the three, apparently presupposing that mind and mental consciousness are distinguishable.

Sometimes, too, viññāṇa is spoken of as if it is spatially locatable, e. g. at Dīgha Nikāya II xv 21-2, where it is said to 'descend' (okkamati) into the mother's womb according to one translation. The Pali Text Society dictionary has this to say about okkamati:⁸

Lit. to enter, go down into, fall into. fig. to come on, to develop, to appear in (of a subjective state). It is strange that this important word has been so much misunderstood, for the English idiom is the same. We say 'he went to sleep', without meaning that he went anywhere. So we may twist it around and say that 'sleep overcame him', without meaning any struggle. The two phrases mean exactly the same -- an internal change, or development, culminating in sleep.

Among the examples cited afterwards in the PTS dictionary, the very same phrase which Piyananda translates differently viz.,

viññāṇam na okkamissatha (but taken from D II 63), is rendered 'if consciousness were not to develop in the womb'. And in another place the PTS dictionary stresses the idea of entering rather than of developing, as in 'a god, on his rebirth, entered his new mother's womb (kucchiṃ okkami)' (MN III 119). Whether one stresses on the one hand the idea of development (or of 'entering' in the sense of developing, as in 'he went to sleep'), or on the other hand the idea of descending bringing with it the difficulty of spatializing the mental, one thing is clear. Continuity of a cycle of lives in early Buddhism does not imply a permanent substance as a substratum (such as ātman or svabhāva) which is supposed to be independent of causal conditions.

Does it make any sense to say that there can be continuity in early Buddhism without ātmavāda? The reply is that 'continuity' plays different roles in language and that the objection misleads one by assuming a single picture of what counts as continuity. As Wittgenstein points out in Philosophical Investigations, the strength of a cord does not always depend on there being a single strand which runs from end to end, but sometimes depends on the inter-relationship between overlapping and criss-crossing fibers, none of which runs the entire length of the cord. The early Buddhist doctrine of rebirth may be viewed like this: there is no permanent unchanging ātman linking up successive lives with its continuous psychic fiber, but there is nevertheless continuity which is assured by over-lapping and criss-crossing fibres. Buddhists sometimes use the metaphor of a flame in order to make this sort of point, since the flame is ever-changing yet continuous.

But what Pali concept is applicable for the 'fibres'? And does this sort of view make sense philosophically? To take the first question first: the cognitive consciousness of a newly reborn

individual depends for its development on dispositions (viññāṇa depends on saṅkhārā). As Kalupahana observes, 'when it is said that dispositions condition consciousness, it means that the dispositions (saṅkhārā, hsing), by conditioning consciousness, or more correctly the unconscious process, determine the nature of the psychic personality of the newly born individual'.⁹ In this way saṅkhārā might be understood as the formative psychic strands of the rebirth process which condition the viññāṇa of the subsequent person. But in fact there is no one term which provides the rebirth link in early Buddhism, and it has been suggested that citta provides the link (Johansson), and that gandhabba does so (O.H. de A. Wijesekera). Viññāṇa as a stream of consciousness might be taken as the link (Piyananda), as long as one does not take it as identical and permanent in past, future, and present in view of Buddha's rejection of 'this same one, not another...fares on' in the reply to Sati. Mano, however, never occurs in this connection. Thus, there are several candidates for the rebirth link (saṅkhārā, citta, gandhabba, viññāṇa), and no consistent, technical view about this matter in early Buddhism. But this should not obscure the fact that there is a clear view to the effect that whatever term is used, continuity and moral responsibility across lives is affirmed.

In the remainder of this section, support for the view just outlined will be mustered by criticizing alternative accounts, and later in section II the philosophical question just mentioned above will be dealt with in detail.

Piyananda writes:¹⁰

According to the Upanisads, atman is imperishable, eternal, has the shape of a manikin living in the heart, and is the perceiver, conceiver, and knower. In Buddhist thought, vinnana is passive perishable, evanescent, formless, neither a perceiver, conceiver, nor a knower, and functions only as a passive force of the life-continuum, the major part of mind

which continues throughout life and hereafter.

Piyananda suggests that atman is 'analogous to the Buddhist concept of vinnana', but in the above respects which he mentions is different. Of course he does not identify the Buddhist view with ātmavāda, but I think that the comparison might tempt one to adopt a mistaken picture. Comparisons are useful when they elucidate something, but it is not clear what could be elucidated by comparing the early Buddhist position with one it explicitly rejects.

Recall, for example, the Mahātaṇhāsakaṅkhasutta.¹¹ Here the monk Sāti is rebuked by Buddha for holding the erroneous view:

Tathā 'haṃ Bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājānāmi yathā tad ev' idaṃ viññāṇaṃ sandhāvati saṃsarati, anaññaṃ ti.

Or:

Insofar as I understand dhamma taught by the Lord it is that this consciousness itself runs on, fares on, not another.

The Pali has the force of: the same one, not a different one. The identity ascribed to viññāṇa across lives by Sāti is repudiated by Buddha, who emphasizes that consciousness is dependent on conditions and that if there are no conditions, then there is no consciousness.

Another passage which shows that on the early Buddhist view it is misleading to compare viññāṇa with ātman is MN I 139 (MLS I 178) where it is stated that whatever sort of consciousness (viññāṇa) is in question, all should be seen as it really is: not the self (atta). Since the Buddha is thus reputed to have made it a special point to disallow thinking of viññāṇa as the self, a comparison of these two terms seems wrongheaded.

It should be noted that the early Buddhist position is not

ambiguous about the notion of self. It is not just that there is no evidence for the existence of self considered as a permanent, unchanging substance or soul, but that there is nothing of the kind. For at MN I 136 (MLS I 175) it is said of atta: 'So evaṃ samanupassanto asati na paritassatīti' (or, 'he regarding thus that which does not exist, will not be anxious'). The term 'asati' means 'that which does not exist', and so the meaning is very clear.

Denial of a self in the sense of soul which is always the same is not tantamount to denial of continuity, however, for continuity and sameness are obviously different concepts. K. N. Jayatilleke's phrase 'continuity without identity' may be useful to recall.¹²

Suppose, for example, a string with different colors along different segments such that there is continuity but not identity, in the sense that although the string is continuous, its parts have different colors. Now in the case of the multi-colored string, one can ask the question 'what is it that continues?' and answer it with reference to the string. But can one ask, let alone answer, the question in the early Buddhist context? If one does, is this like: 'what feeds on consciousness-sustenance?', the very question which the Buddha is depicted as rejecting? I do not think so, for the answer to the latter question is ātman, while the answer to the former is in terms of some of the Pali terms in the group mentioned above (so long as one is careful not to say it stays the same).

Two attempts to answer 'what is it that continues?' in rebirth follow. Johansson, psychologist and Pali scholar, thinks that citta 'includes all the layers of consciousness, even the unconscious: by it the continuity and identity are safeguarded.'¹³ But he offers no textual support for this particular claim, and continues by citing passages to show that 'the whole gamut of Buddhist methods therefore aims at purifying the citta.' Doing so

does not support the other claim, however. And as previously mentioned, Piyananda, on the other hand, employs viññāṇa as an ātman-surrogate.

If it is asked why there is no one technical term supplied for the rebirth link in early Buddhism, the answer can only be speculative. It might be that this is intentional, in order to avoid articulating a technical philosophical view which might be a source of attachment, or it might be due to diverse terminology being used by reporters of the Buddha's doctrine. But in any case it is clear that early Buddhism does not offer a substitute for the concept of ātman, as the passage declaring it not to exist (asat) and the doctrine of impermanence (anicca) show.

As an historical note it is worth mentioning that the puggalo (person) theory which developed in the Sammitiya wing of the Abhidharma school¹⁴ would not have been a likely development had it not been for a certain indeterminacy in the early position. These proponents of pudgalavāda supported their doctrine that 'individuals (puggalo) exist as such in the truest sense' with reference to the 'Burden and the Burden bearer sutta' of the Samyutta Nikāya (XXII, 221).¹⁵

It is evident that in early Buddhism, as in Zen, there is little or no theoretical interest in rebirth. Punabbhava (lit., 're-becoming') occurs several times, yet the focus of attention is much more on ending attachment and achieving liberation than it is on discussing rebirth. Perhaps it remained a 'conceptual grey area' in early Buddhism in order to avoid what is regarded as inconsequential speculation which takes attention from the Buddhist path. I do not think that the concept of rebirth in early Buddhism is muddled on the (mistaken) ground that an ātman or something like it in point of permanence is logically required. And some concepts

do have 'blurry edges' and are nevertheless functional. Indeed, their usefulness in the conceptual system as concepts (I am not speaking of expediency here) may require that their edges are blurry. Sometimes a slightly out of focus photograph could not be replaced with a sharper one and still achieve the desired effect. Thus, it is not a criticism of early Buddhism to say that there is no one term for the rebirth link (in contrast to what Frauwallner would have one believe).

There does not have to be some one term for the rebirth link as a precondition for its making sense. Kalupahana, although emphasizing the importance of viññāna, points out that 'this stream of consciousness (viññāpasota) is the same as the stream of becoming (bhavasota) mentioned often in the early discourses'.¹⁶ One may refer to the same process or thing by making use of different referring expressions, and thus the problem is not the lack of a single term being applied but rather the problem is the philosophical one of whether what is said with different expressions for the rebirth link makes sense.

There are two problems which can be raised here, the problem of the unity of consciousness, and that of the meaning of seeing things 'as they really are'. The problem of the unity of consciousness is really two problems. The first might be put: what keeps the personality separate from others while alive, what binds the aggregates?; the second, what insures continuity between lives?

In order to throw a little light on the first of the two subdivisions, consider what the problem is not. Hume ends the treatment 'Of Personal Identity' in the Treatise admitting his inability, for the moment at least, to reconcile the two principles that all perceptions are distinct existences and that the mind

never recognizes any necessary connection between them.¹⁷ That this is not the early Buddhist problem, however, becomes clear when one sees that the position does not divide perceptions into 'distinct existences'. It is precisely this fact that makes possible an East-West philosophers' conference on Whitehead and Buddhism, since the process philosophy differs from Hume's on the point of 'distinct existences'. In early Buddhism there is no theory of momentary impressions, as Kalupahana rightly emphasizes.¹⁸

Specifically, the conception of the pañcakhandha (or five aggregates consisting of rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhārā, viññāṇa) does not commit early Buddhism to a Humean view of perceptions as discrete entities. It is true that saññā is often translated as 'perceptions', but it is at least equally justifiable to render it in the singular in the context of the pañcakhandha as the PTS dictionary does: 'sense, consciousness, perception, being the third khandha'.¹⁹

In order to support this claim it is important to consider the meaning of khandha, which the PTS dictionary divides into a 'crude meaning' and an 'applied meaning'. The former (IA) is 'bulk, massiveness (gross) substance', e. g., in reference to an elephant's back, a person's shoulder or back, a tree trunk, and as a section of literature considered as a unity. As a 'more general' meaning of this type (IB) it also denotes e. g., fire, water, a heap of merit,²⁰ or an abundance of wealth.

As for the 'applied meaning' (II), part of this (A) refers to 'all that is comprised under a rubric 'in a collective sense' as either a mass, or and very differently, as parts. IIB, however, specifically means 'constituent element' really 'in an individual sense', and it is here that Rhys Davids and Stede note that Buddhaghosa, the commentator, paraphrases khandha as rāsi

or heap. Of course this gives it a particular slant: a heap is a heap of certain things, it is not a mass taken as a unit.

But Buddhaghosa's interpretation here need not be taken as definitive of the early position in view of the alternative possibility of construing khandha as 'mass'. Certainly there are passages in which the khandha themselves are said to comprise a being in a way comparable to the way that a chariot's parts comprise the chariot, but this does not mean that each of them is in turn thought of as a collection of individual parts. Hence, the early Buddhist problem is not Hume's problem. Since there is no supposition that all perceptions are distinct existences, there is no problem of reconciling this with any other principle. And if one asks 'what keeps the perceptions of a person together in early Buddhism?', this is to assume without evidence the distinct existence of perceptions in early Buddhism.

If one now returns to the problem of the unity of consciousness earlier posed, which soul-substance theoreticians may be inclined to stress, it can be argued that the so-called problem is irresolvable because it presupposes precisely what is inadmissible. For to ask: 'what keeps the aggregates of person A separate from those of person B in this life', presupposes that something must, when it is not clear what that would be like. It presupposes that this unity is an unlikely structure which requires an 'underpinning'. What would this underpinning be like? What precisely have we not got, that we might have? I submit that no philosophically defensible answer is forthcoming, because of the unclarity of what is being asked. As Strawson observes about 'the problem of the principle of unity, of identity, of the particular consciousness':²¹

If there were such a principle, then each of us would have to apply it in order to decide whether any contemporary

experience of his were his own or someone else's; and there is no sense in this suggestion.

The claim that there is a need for a mysterious sort of meta-physical rubber band to keep the five aggregates together rests on a misunderstanding of the framework of early Buddhism. For an analysis in terms of the five aggregates is not the same as an explanatory account as to why things are one way rather than another. And unless one presupposes the need for such a logically odd sort of rubber band, it is not clear that a descriptive analysis is inadequate.

In one way, perhaps, the early position is more sophisticated than Abhidharma attempts to systematize and 'rationalize' it, since it does not fall into the pudgalavāda error of thinking that a pudgala very like the ātman is logically required in order for rebirth to make sense. The anatta doctrine in early Buddhism is not a logical blunder, but it is an attempt to avoid a metaphysical one.

It remains to be seen what can be said of the second question posed, 'what insures continuity between lives?', in relation to philosophical issues of personal identity and reidentification.

- ¹ Majjhima Nikāya I, 265; Middle Length Sayings I, 320-321.
- ² I. e., it is inconsistent with anicca (impermanence) and with anattā (non-substantiality).
- ³ Ibid. (fn. 1).
- ⁴ Majjhima Nikāya I, 265-266; Middle Length Sayings I, 321-322.
- ⁵ Dickwela Piyananda, 'The Concept of Mind in Early Buddhism' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1974), p. 91.
- ⁶ Ibid. (fn. 4).
- ⁷ Especially in view of Kaccāyana's usage of expressions like 'mental objects cognizable by mind, past future, present' and his place as a good expositor of Buddha's view.
- ⁸ T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary (London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 163.
- ⁹ David J. Kalupahana, Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (Honolulu, 1975), p. 120.
- ¹⁰ Piyananda, op. cit., p. 91.
- ¹¹ Majjhima Nikāya I, 256; Middle Length Sayings I, 311.
- ¹² K. N. Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge (London, Allen and Unwin, 1963).
- ¹³ Rune E. A. Johansson, The Psychology of Nirvana (London, Allen and Unwin, 1969), p. 30.
- ¹⁴ Sir Charles Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism (New York and London, 1954), vol. II, p. 101.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶David J. Kalupahana, Buddhist Philosophy (Honolulu, 1976), p. 52.

¹⁷David Hume, Treatise, Appendix.

¹⁸Kalupahana, ibid., p. 36.

¹⁹Rhys Davids and Stede, op. cit., p. 670.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 232-233.

²¹P. F. Strawson, Individuals (London, 1959), p. 133.

II

In this section I shall first present the background on the no soul view and rebirth by focusing on what is denied in denying the soul as existing (asat), the meaning of atta, the three marks of existence, the Sabbasutta and the rebirth process (punabbhava). Afterwards a series of philosophical problems will be posed, one of which will be addressed here and the rest in the following chapter.

If one wants to get clear as to what is being denied when the early Buddhist no soul view is set forth, then it is important to understand the characteristics of the pre-Buddhist ātman view against which it reacts. As the Hindu view of ātman is presented, it is agent and controller. The PTS dictionary observes:¹

It is described in the Upanisads as a small creature, in shape like a man, dwelling in ordinary times in the heart. It escapes from the body in sleep or trance; when it returns to the body life and motion reappear. It escapes from the body at death, then continues to carry on an everlasting life of its own.

This is a convenient summary of one strand of ātman belief, but as Malalasekera points out, while in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad the ātman is regarded as unknowable, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad it is regarded as not only knowable but as perceivable.² Thus one can distinguish two strands of Upanisadic talk about ātman, an agnostic mention and a more positive account. (Whether it is 'empirically' see, as M. thinks, is another matter.)

T. W. Rhys Davids observes that in the pre-Buddhist Upaniṣads the ātman has size, at first being characterized as about the size of a grain of barley or rice, and later as the size of the thumb (thus called 'the dwarf'). Rhys Davids reasons that since it is sometimes described as containing the elements of earth, water, fire and ether, it was regarded as material but with mental qualit-

ies attached.³

Malalasekera distinguishes three senses of attā: one's own as opposed to others', person as a mind/body complex, self as a metaphysical entity or soul.⁴ Clearly the early Buddhist view does not deny the existence of attā in the second sense, as the five khandha (Skt. skandha) classification shows.

Applying the point that there are two strands of talk about ātman to Malalasekera's three categories, it is evident that his third category needs to be widened. He does not see that his earlier mentioned point about there being two versions of ātman belief (Bṛhadāraṇyaka vs. Chāndogya) needs to be applied to the triadic classification. Otherwise one gets an importantly misleading characterization of what the early Buddhist no soul view rejects. It rejects the notion that there is a permanent mental entity called ātman, regardless of whether this is thought of as unknowable or as perceivable (through meditation). It stresses that consciousness (viññāṇa) depends on conditions, so that when there are no conditions, then there is no consciousness.⁵ Elsewhere it observes that there is no reason to be vexed about that which does not exist.⁶ Briefly, we can say that the third sense of attā, the one that the no soul view is directed against, is the sense in which attā denotes neither ownership nor observable person, but a theoretical entity whether conceived of as 'partly physical (dehātmavāda)' or as 'the life-breath (prāṇātmavāda)' animating the body, though different from it.⁷

In early Buddhism it is thought that there are three characteristics or marks of existence: anicca (impermanence), anatta (non-substantiality), and dukkha (variously: mental or physical discomfort, unsatisfactoriness). The anatta doctrine has implications for the existence of any sort of metaphysical or physical substance. One might, for example, discuss the notion of Issara or Creator

God in this context, but in what follows here I wish to focus the discussion on the no soul view. And although early Buddhism disputes both that belief in soul is psychologically conducive to spiritual growth, and that there are adequate grounds for belief in the soul's existence, we are here concerned with the more philosophically interesting latter point.

Neither ordinary experience nor meditational experience, it is claimed, shows the existence of a permanent soul. Agency is thought of as one of the possible attributes of the soul, and at M. N. I 231-233, there is a dialogue between Buddha and Aggivessana on this point. What emerges is that none of the five aggregates taken to constitute personality can be identified singly or conjointly as a soul or self, because like a king it would have control over what falls under ~~its~~ domain, yet there is no such controller of the five aggregates. Aggivessana is asked whether he has control over the five, whether, say, he can make his form change at will. It is in each case made plain that there is no such controller of the five aggregates. Perhaps Aggivessana suffers from the 'leading question' treatment so often dealt out by Socrates, for the argument seems to proceed with the implicit assumption that if there is an ātman who controls, then ātman must have 'complete' control -- with no consideration to the possibility that a limited degree of control might be the most that ātman could muster.

Another sutta which takes a strong line against the idea of ātman is the Sabbasutta of the Samyutta Nikāya.⁸ In delimiting what counts as 'everything' viz., the five senses plus the mind and the objects of each, no room is left for the existence of soul. How, then, is rebirth thought to occur?

The rebirth process (punabbhava, re-becoming) is said to occur according to a person's past actions (kamma). It is thought to be

checkable that this is so by developing abhiññā, the psychic powers, and in some sense 'seeing' that it is so. The rebirth process is distinguished from the Hindu transmigration, and here I use these terms to mark the distinction between the sorts of view which hold that a permanent soul (ātman, whether taken as entirely non-physical, partly physical, or unknowable) transmigrates, and the view which holds that a stream of consciousness survives death in the case of an unliberated being and is reborn.

Prima facie there may seem to be a problem in reconciling the anāṭṭa or non-substantiality view with rebirth. It might be thought that a soul is logically required in order that moral responsibility across ~~lives~~ be intelligible in early Buddhism. If it is not the same soul substance across lives at T_1 and T_2 , then in what way is one justified in regarding the consciousness at T_2 as that of the same person? And if it is not the same person, then what sense does it make to ascribe moral responsibility for actions performed by another?

As is sometimes the case in philosophy, the problem is with the question itself rather than with there being no answer. It would be a mistake to suggest, as the question does, that one needs to believe in the existence of soul in order to justifiably hold a person responsible for his actions. In a court of law, e.g., it would be regarded as a peculiar and inadmissible argument to say that a thief is really not responsible for his crime done last year on the grounds that there is no soul substance making him the same person now as then. (If it could be shown that he was a schizophrenic, say, this would be determined on the basis of behavioral evidence and not on debate about 'soul substance'.)

With this as background, some important philosophical questions can be raised: (i) is rebirth an empirical hypothesis? (ii) If so, would evidence for rebirth be also evidence for transmigra-

tion? (iii) If there is no evidence which would specifically show that rebirth (and not transmigration) occurs, is there at least evidence which shows that something of the kind occurs: that either rebirth or transmigration holds? (iv) Does early Buddhism provide any way of reidentifying a person in a subsequent life? Beginning with the last question first, the others will be examined in Ch. 5, I.

As De Silva notes in Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy, there are three analogies used in early Buddhism to present the idea of continuity in the rebirth process:⁹

The mind is a dynamic continuum which is described by the Buddha by means of a number of analogies. Sometimes, it is compared to a flame, whose existence depends upon a number of factors: i.e. the wick, oil, etc. - sometimes it is compared to a stream (sota), and again to the movements of a monkey jumping from branch to branch, letting go of one branch only after it clings to another, etc., are used.

Although it is questionable whether the idea of a 'continuum' adequately describes cyclic samsāra, a very important point is made in emphasizing the uninterrupted nature of the continuity, that e.g. on the monkey analogy, the monkey does not let go of one branch until he grasps another. As Kalupahana points out, there is no theory of antarābhava or intermediate existence in early Buddhism, this being a later development.¹⁰

Scholars disagree about whether there is a belief in disembodied consciousness in early Buddhism. Jayatilleke thinks that there is a notion of disembodied consciousness at work, as is evident in his taking nāmarūpa (lit., name-form) to be a psychophysical unity composed of sperm, ovum, and 'discarnate spirit' (gandhabba) or what is called the re-linking consciousness (paṭi-sandhi-viññāṇa).¹¹ On the other hand Kalupahana regards it as

'quite incorrect to postulate a mind-made body existing after death, independent of the material body, until it gains a foothold on a new body in rebirth.'¹²

Although these are not the only twentieth-century writers to comment on this issue in early Buddhism, their difference here is representative of a divergence in interpretation. The relationship between each general view and each corresponding particular interpretation of a text is crucial.¹³ For example, either okkamati is translated as 'develop' or as 'descend' in passages where it is said that rebirth does not occur unless viññāṇa develops in or descends into the womb. If 'descend' is favored, then it is accepted that early Buddhism has a notion of disembodied consciousness. And if 'develop' is favored, then no commitment to a disembodied consciousness view is made for early Buddhism.

In the sutta where Sāti is chided for holding that consciousness fares on, what is rejected is the idea that this same consciousness, not another, continues, suggesting that Sati took viññāṇa as ātman.¹⁴ Thus it is not that the sutta rejects the continuance of a psychic element as such, but that it rejects ātmavāda. Consequently an appeal to this sutta will not eliminate the question of what the rebirth link is, as a basis for the ascription of moral responsibility. Whatever the words of the Buddha in fact were, and whatever his disciples and hearers thought he meant concerning rebirth, it is not an historical point but a logical one -- and one which any account of early Buddhist thought must face -- that the ascription of moral responsibility here requires the supposition of a rebirth link, regardless of whether an account of it is given in the texts.

There are three main sources of a reluctance to admit the supposition of a transfer of a psychic element in rebirth which have their root in early Buddhism. There may be others, but these

seem to be the main ones; at this point considerations on the intelligibility of such talk are not presented. First, there is a misinterpretation of the dialogue with Sāti, which arises by not noticing that the view rejected is that the same consciousness continues.¹⁵ In effect this sutta is a rejection of soul theory and not of the possibility that viññāṇa might provide a rebirth link. Secondly, there is an often-cited text which reports that the Buddha refused to answer the question as to whether the soul (and here the word used is jīva) is identical with the body or is different from the body, and this might seem evidence that he held no view of disembodied consciousness.¹⁶ But because the point of his refusal may have been to show the irrelevance of 'wordy warfare' to the path, because the word jīva is used by the Jainas sect, and because no argument from silence can establish what the Buddha did or did not believe, the text yields no firm basis for the view that early Buddhism denied the disembodied consciousness view. And the continuity required in early Buddhism is neither that of the permanent ātman, nor that involving an intermediate state (antarābhava) wherein a psychic component exists without any physical basis. Thirdly, there is the apparent difficulty of accounting for contiguity as a characteristic of the causal relation if the supposition of disembodied consciousness is made. Kalupahana and Kōyu write:¹⁷

According to early Buddhist philosophy life is a stream (sota), an unbroken (abbhacchinna) succession (paṭipāṭi) of aggregates (khandha). There cannot be any temporal or spatial break or pause in this life continuity (bhava-santati), for the affirmation of it would be to deny the validity of the relations of contiguity (samanantara - and anantara-paccaya) of the doctrine of relations (paccaya) which is the cornerstone of Buddhist philosophy.

The difficulty thus arising from the concept of gandhabba could be overcome and the problem of rebirth could be explained quite consistently with the philosophy of life as given above, only if gandhabba is taken to mean the death-conscious -

ness (cuticitta) of the dying person. Then gandhabba would serve as the object of rebirth consciousness (paṭisandhicitta) so that the character of the new-born child would be determined or influenced by the consciousness of the dying person. Thus is the continuity of life set up without a break until the attainment of Parinibbāna.

About the reluctance to countenance disembodied consciousness as an early Buddhist view which this passage engenders, three points need to be made. First, there is no reference given here or elsewhere in Kalupahana's Causality to show that the Pali terms for contiguity are used in early Buddhism.¹⁸ In fact, one finds, both in this article and in the book just mentioned, that this is a Sarvāstivādin position. Hence there is no problem of reconciling it with the early Buddhist concept of gandhabba. Secondly, the idea of 'death-consciousness' (cuticitta) is also a Sarvāstivādin one, and is likewise a later addition. Thirdly, just how the 'character of the new-born child would be determined or influenced by the consciousness of the dying person' at all, but especially without the supposition of disembodied consciousness, is unclear.

So the sources of reluctance to admit the possibility of there being a view of disembodied consciousness in early Buddhism are not insurmountable. Since both the permanent ātman and the free-floating antarābhava without physical basis are not in the early Buddhist picture, the view suggested (but not stated as a theory) seems to be one of psychic parallelism in some passages at least. For instance, it is said that if the human eye is destroyed, the divine eye (dibbacakkhu) is destroyed also.

Some translations may mislead the casual reader into thinking that there is a technical term for the rebirth link, for instance, 'the cord of rebirth'.¹⁹ It would be easy to be misled by this into thinking that there is an early Buddhist term for 'cord' which

designates the rebirth linking process.¹⁹ In all fairness it should be said that this translation does somewhat convey the sense of bhavanetti (lit. , 'leading to becoming'). Yet there is no term in the text here which means 'cord', and without checking it might go unnoticed that the basis for the introduction of the word lies elsewhere in a commentary.

The problem of whether and how the reidentification of persons across lives can occur remains ((iv), p. 117). Are there any criteria for such reidentification ?

Before addressing the question it is worthwhile to emphasize that a follower of the Buddhist path would not ordinarily be concerned with such theoretical niceties. Although early Buddhism does not appeal to faith as a justification for doctrines, the path-follower would say that such speculation on things unrelated to the elimination of craving (taṇhā), and the destruction of rāga, dosa, and moha or passion, hatred, and confusion, is counter-productive. The decision not to pursue certain questions is not tantamount to faith as a positive virtue in the way that Christians, e. g. , sometimes hold it, but the net result of staying 'within the fold', on the one hand, or 'on the path', on the other, is of the same sort. The anti-speculation of the Buddha is to a religious purpose, not to a positivistic philosophical one.

Padmasiri DeSilva cites Strawson on reidentification in saying:²⁰

Attempts have been made to present logically adequate criteria for re-identifying persons in terms of consciousness, memory, and body. Strawson's position on this is very instructive: persons are distinct from material bodies, though this does not imply that they are therefore immaterial bodies. A person has states of consciousness as well as physical attributes and it is not merely to be identified with one or the other. This concept of the human person as a psycho-physical being fits in well with the Buddhist analysis.

To an extent it does fit, since in the five aggregate schema of analyzing personality, one finds neither a physical reductionism of person to matter nor a view of disembodied consciousness constituting the person. Form, feeling, sensation, disposition, and consciousness are together said to constitute the person, and there is no talk of some of these being more basic in the sense of being able to exist without the other. So taken in isolation from talk about the rebirth process, it might seem obvious that there is no possibility of disembodied consciousness in early Buddhism. But the situation is not so simple.

And it is not clear that Strawson's view provides any solution to the problem of reidentification of the person as far as early Buddhism is concerned, for he takes bodies as 'basic particulars' and observes:²¹

These considerations taken together suggest that, if material bodies are basic from the point of view of referential identification, they must also be basic from the point of view of reidentification. That is to say, the reidentification criteria for material bodies should not be found to turn on the identities of other particulars except such as themselves are or have material bodies, whereas the reidentification criteria for particulars of other categories should be found to turn in part on the identity of material bodies. This expectation is amply fulfilled. If, for example, we take any familiar process-name, such as 'thaw' or 'battle', we shall find it impossible to give a detailed account of identifying a particular process of the kind concerned as the same again, which do not involve any reference to some material bodies or other

A monk may claim to remember 'his divers former habitations' or those of others,²² but whenever he compares a meditational image seen at T_1 to a body seen at T_2 , or compares a meditational image seen at T_1 to a meditational image seen at T_2 , or a body at T_1 to an image at T_2 , Strawson's view of reidentification will not

rescue the monks' claim to be seeing the same person. For on his view material bodies are basic from the points of view of both identification and reidentification, and in all three cases just mentioned the criteria fail to apply. In the first sort of case what is identified initially is not a body and hence it cannot be re-identified by an image. In the second sort of case a body is neither identified nor reidentified. And in the third sort of case no bodily reidentification takes place at T_2 . Seeing a body at T_1 and a body at T_2 is not in question, for it is meditational vision rather than ordinary vision which is supposed operative. Therefore, since these cases are exhaustive, it follows that Strawson's criteria are not instructive, contrary to De Silva's suggestion, as supporting the monk's claim to be seeing the same person.

Strawson and Penelhum are both willing to give 'disembodied consciousness' just enough rope to show that there is nothing which can be hanged. Strawson does it by specifying the conditions (no perceptions of a body of one's own; no power to cause physical change) in such a way that the possibility of continuing self-awareness of one's self as an individual hinges on thinking of one's self as a former person, so that ~~one~~ might have only a vicarious interest in human affairs. Consequently:²³

In proportion as the memories fade, and this vicarious living palls, to that degree his concept of himself as an individual becomes attenuated. At the limit of attenuation there is, from the point of view of his survival as an individual, no difference between the continuance of experience and its cessation.

This criticism, while perhaps a healthy antidote against 'spiritualist' views of the afterlife, does not touch rebirth or reincarnation, however, on which views the rarefied atmosphere of only thinking of oneself as a former person need not prevail.

Penelhum argues that although one can understand suggestions like 'Ruth is Bridey' in certain contexts, this amounts to nothing so far as the disembodied consciousness thesis is concerned, because: 'to say that Ruth is Bridey is not to say that Ruth-Bridey continues in between, and it gives that suggestion no sense of its own.'²⁴ Memory, he argues, is not an infallible criterion of personal identity, but one parasitic upon the body criterion. Thus, the notion of disembodied consciousness is considered unintelligible.

The force of Penelhum's conclusion that the notion of disembodied consciousness is unintelligible depends on the assumption that the body criterion is basic to reidentifying a person. In any dialogue with a Buddhist, though, this assumption would be question-begging, since it is fundamentally what is in question. Thus, the issue becomes one of whether or not the Buddhist can give any criteria for reidentifying a person which are feasible.

This problem is related to the problem about whether and how a rebirth link may be found in early Buddhism. O. H. de A. Wijesekera, for example, argues that Amarakośa's gloss on gandharva (Pali: gandhabba) as antarābhava (intermediate existence) gives an accurate understanding of the early scholastic interpretation, if not of the early Buddhist one.²⁵ Amarakośa, he argues, 'must have naturally been conversant with the traditional exegesis of the term, at least in the early Buddhist schools'. Yet as Kalupahana mentions, antarābhava is not itself an early Buddhist term.

In focusing on Jayatilleke's phrase 'continuity without identity' some distinction between 'exact identity' and 'sameness' is required. For it is a necessary condition for ascribing moral responsibility for action x done by P_1 at T_1 to P_2 at T_2 , that P_1 be the

same person as P_2 . P_1 may not be exactly identical to P_2 but must be the same person if moral responsibility is to be ascribed. Barring odd cases like multiple personality, P_1 and P_2 are clearly the same, and are judged so on criteria such as bodily continuity and/or memory. But if the task of reidentification is supposed to span various lives, then: 1) the bodily continuity criterion fails to apply; 2) memory, for all but an exceptional minority at the very least, does not even seem to indicate a history of previous lives.

But could there be, from a rather elitist epistemological stance, a view of the meditating adept who can verify previous lives of himself and others by making use of the reidentifying criterion of memory? Such a view is congruent with the Buddhist empiricism thesis to be examined shortly. At this stage I shall just comment on the philosophical worth of this stance, leaving aside the question of whether the early position takes this stance. My claim is that this stance is not consistent with the early Buddhist view of the world and time, so that if it were taken in fact, this would be a mistake. For there is a view of time and world on which these extend into an infinite cyclical past with no beginning. And unless there were a view to the effect that the universe came into being at a particular time, there would be an infinite regress of lives such that all the data would never be in as to whether the law of kamma applied in all cases and all the time. It might apply to some individuals and not to others; it might apply to a given individual through several lives but not very far back, and these possibilities cannot logically be excluded unless all the data are in. Since this is impossible here, the most the data could generate taken as empirical evidence would be a weakly quantified law and not the certainty of a world view about ethics and action. And the

early Buddhist position does not present a weakly quantified law, but a view of what inevitably happens given the conditions (of craving or taṇhā).

Thus far it has been shown that Strawson's view of reidentification as requiring reference to body will not rescue the monk's meditation-based claim to be seeing the same person, contra DeSilva. Thus in answering (iv) -- the question of whether early Buddhism provides any way of reidentification -- it will not do to accept DeSilva's view that Strawson's position on 'logically adequate criteria for re-identifying persons' is 'very instructive' for early Buddhism (pp. 117 and 121 herein). Care must be taken to distinguish the issue of what the person is from that of what criteria can reidentify the person, and DeSilva does not do so in the passage quoted in which the appeal to Strawson's position is made.

Next I want to take up the question of whether the body criterion must be accepted for reidentification so that consequently it would not be logically possible to supply a mode of reidentification which would work in early Buddhism. Is Strawson's body criterion to be accepted?

The issue of conceivability of an afterlife is separate from the issue of whether it is (in some sense, and this is problematic) factually the case that there is an afterlife. If one uses the term 'reincarnation' as a generic term to cover both Hindu transmigration and Buddhist rebirth, one can say that to believe in reincarnation is to take a stand on the second sort of issue. And about such a belief that something continues which spans various lives, it can be asked: what criterion or criteria can be used to reidentify a person in a different life? Discussion of this issue below shows, I think, that the crucial issue is not this one but whether there are any necessary and sufficient conditions for ascription of 'the same

person'.

A criterion is distinct from a condition. A criterion is the sign one uses or the evidence produced for making a determination. Unlike a criterion, a condition gives part (at least) of the meaning of a term, and the set of all necessary and sufficient conditions comprises the meaning of a term. What it means to be Lord Mayor of London, for example, requires a whole list of conditions, whereas a criterion would not give all that is required for meaning.

Memory, for example, might be thought to give a criterion for personal identity, but as a criterion it would not give the meaning of personal identity. In the section entitled 'Personal Identity' in the Essay, Locke maintains that memory is both a criterion and a condition. There are problems here, as Flew points out in 'Locke on Personal Identity', given this schema:

J _s	J _s	J _s
T ₁	T ₂	T ₃

For if what it means to say that J_s at T₂ is the same as J_s at T₁ is that J_s at T₂ remembers himself as J_s at T₁, then meaning is dependent on the frailties of human memory. This obviously will not do, and needs to be reformulated as: J_s at T₂ is at least in principle capable of remembering. In the reformulation, however, one has only a condition for meaningful use of the term 'person'.

Bernard Williams tries to rule this reformulation out of court. He argues that memory is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition, since memory alone will not guarantee a way to identify persons in view of the possibility of two who claim to have the same memories. The most Williams has shown, however, is that granted

a notion of personal identity as we have it, the body criterion is required for identification. But how different would things have to be for us such that this would not hold? Hick argues that there are cases in which we would not deny that X is the same person even if X disappeared and then reappeared. If this is right (and it seems to me so), then he has shown that the body criterion advocated by Strawson and by Williams need not apply in all contexts. It also follows that Penelhum's conclusion that disembodied consciousness is unintelligible (p. 124) is undermined, because it requires that it is necessarily the case that the body criterion is basic to reidentification when that turns out to be a contingent matter.

But if one rejects the body criterion here in addition to memory (earlier disposed of on p. 125) as applicable to early Buddhism, is one left in a position similar to that of H. D. Lewis in The Self and Immortality? In a review of that work in Mind Stewart R. Sutherland notes:²⁶

One possibility which is considered and rejected is that of bodily continuity. In his discussion of this Lewis considers the case outlined by Bernard Williams, of two of our contemporaries, each claiming to be Guy Fawkes and to have the memories appropriate to being the continuing self who was Guy Fawkes. Lewis deals with this case by asserting that we should retain our belief that there can only be one continuing Guy Fawkes and that thus in the case of only one of the contenders can the 'alleged memories of a life as Guy Fawkes' be genuine (p. 103). Granted his rejection of this possibility and the fact that he does not believe memory to constitute, or to be a condition of there being, continuing identity, it is difficult to see what other alternative is offered, as an account of the nature of continuing personal identity.

Since Lewis is trying to give a philosophical account, it is fair to ask what sort of account he has in mind. But it would be a misunderstanding to insist that there is a similar onus on the early

Buddhist position, since the latter is not intended to provide a philosophical account as one possibility among others to be argued pro and con as Lewis is. This can be said in view of the type of texts being examined (religious ones), but is not a philosophical defense.

A brief summary is in order. My task is not to 'read into' early Buddhism things which are incompatible with its doctrines and orientation, but rather to distinguish points within the parameters of what it does say, might consistently say, or what one might say about it philosophically. I think that it has already been shown here that memory will not supply a necessary condition in an account of necessary and sufficient conditions for the ascription of 'the same person' across lives in early Buddhism. What is in question is not whether there is a criterion, for marks or signs might be necessary and sufficient and might not. What is in question is whether one can have necessary and sufficient conditions for the ascription of sameness. And it is clear that the only other candidates, self-awareness or bodily continuity are irrelevant to reidentification of a person reborn. Hence it follows that what the early Buddhist position does or might consistently offer amounts to nought. Now I would like to suggest what might be said about this 'nought' from a philosophical point of view.

One way of distinguishing, in part, knowledge from opinion is to insist that a necessary condition of the former but not of the latter is that one must be prepared to give 'reasonable grounds' for the claim to knowledge. That this distinction is possible is sometimes taken as flowing from an analysis of knowledge, according to which the three necessary and sufficient conditions are: 1) *p* is true, 2) *X* believes that *p*, and 3) *X* has reasonable grounds for

the belief that p. If and only if these three conditions are met, some (notably Ayer) have argued, is there a legitimate claim to knowledge. Each of the three crucial notions in this account (i. e. , 'true', 'believes', 'has reasonable grounds') may be subject to philosophical scrutiny, but I am not concerned about that here. Instead the intent is to call attention to the possibility that knowing something on this analysis may be not at all like the early Buddhist orientation to rebirth, particularly with respect to the third condition in the standard analysis. In doing so it is instructive to consider some of Wittgenstein's criticisms of G. E. Moore when the latter claimed to know certain things in 'A Defense of Common Sense'. The interesting point is that Moore has confused things which figure in the 'background' with things which can legitimately be regarded as knowledge claims, and hence **it is clear that** the term 'knowledge' is misapplied by Moore. (Wittgenstein has other criticisms of Moore, such as that his use of 'I know' is philosophically irrelevant, but I am not concerned to list them all here.)

Speaking of Moore's truisms Wittgenstein writes in On Certainty:

Everything that I have seen or heard gives me the conviction that no man has ever been far from the earth. Nothing in my picture of the world speaks in favour of the opposite.

94. But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false.

95. The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.

96. It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid.

97. The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other.

98. But if someone were to say "So logic too is an empirical science" he would be wrong. Yet this is right: the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another time as a rule for testing.

I want to suggest that rebirth may be viewed as part of the 'background' against which other beliefs in early Buddhism are seen as true by believers. In support of this it can be pointed out that 'there is rebirth' does not occur as a claim in any of the standard Buddhist schemas such as the four noble truths or the eight-fold noble path. (This is not to say that it never occurs as a reminder. One may be reminded that something is part of the background when someone expresses doubts,) Rather, the first claim of the four noble truths, 'there is dukkha' presupposes impermanence. This impermanence is understood to obtain both on the ordinarily observed level as well as on the not ordinarily observed level of the cycle of rebirth. Thus, the first noble truth presupposes rebirth as a part of the background in early Buddhism.

Belief in 'reincarnation' (used here as a generic term to include both transmigration and rebirth) as a belief in a cyclic flow of lives through different states is an abstraction broad enough to include both Buddhist and Hindu views of the afterlife. It is interesting to see how differently the Greeks thought of the consequences of one's actions -- that they followed one's children rather than one's self in a different life -- but that here too there is a view of the human person's responsibility vastly different from the more individualist one in which there is no responsibility for ancestral

errors or for a future of 'individuals' linked to the person one now is. What I am suggesting is that these beliefs need not be seen as a peculiar set of empirical propositions on the one hand, or disguised tautologies on the other, in order to make sense. Alternatively they may be viewed as part of the 'background' against which other beliefs may fit or fail to fit, since the tests are devised in terms of the background. Treated as part of the background a belief is a presupposition rather than an assumption in an argument or a rule for calculating. To take one sort of example, the base ten arithmetical system is part of the background of many people, so that the system is presupposed in making and in checking calculations. Questions about the comparative usefulness of the system itself do not arise in making calculations in everyday situations, although students of theoretical mathematics might raise them. If they do, the base ten system is no longer treated as part of the background.

As section 96 quoted above suggests, a belief may be at one time treated as part of the background and at a later time be treated as an empirical proposition. Questions of truth or falsity do not arise insofar as a belief is treated as part of the background. The application of this insight for my treatment of rebirth is that 'there is rebirth' is, in early Buddhism, part of the background, but researchers like Ian Stevenson have taken it (he uses the word 'reincarnation') to be an empirical theory and try to test it by gathering data, published in Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation. On a strong notion of verifiability, however, which requires that the in principle possibility of falsification be allowed by specifying conditions for falsification, this study does not show that early Buddhist rebirth is a verifiable theory.

To sum up briefly, the rebirth link in early Buddhism is not

denoted by a single term, but this itself is not a problem. The fact that what early Buddhism does or might consistently say about the problem of reidentification across lives amounts to nought is understandable in terms of the texts treating 'there is rebirth' as part of the conceptual background of early Buddhism. This does not, however, make it a philosophically justifiable view. While treated internally as a background belief 'there is rebirth' does not stand in need of justification, viewed externally there is no good reason to accept 'there is rebirth', for the conceptual problem of reidentification of the person across lives is insurmountable.

Nevertheless, since the Buddhist empiricism thesis has been very influential in twentieth century Pali scholarship, and since there is a claim in early Buddhism to 'know and see' rebirth, it is important to take up these matters in the subsequent chapter.

NOTES

¹ T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary (London, 1972), p. 22.

² G. P. Malalasekera, Encyclopedia of Buddhism (Government Press, Ceylon, 1961) vol. I, p. 568.

³ T. W. Rhys Davids, Buddhist India (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 1971), pp. 251-252.

⁴ Malalasekera op. cit., p. 567.

⁵ Majjhima Nikāya, I, 258-259.

⁶ The word used is asati.

⁷ K. N. Upadhyaya, Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 1971), p. 81.

⁸ Samyutta Nikāya, IV, 15.

⁹ Padmasiri DeSilva, Introduction to Buddhist Psychology with foreword by John Hick (London, 1979), p. 83.

¹⁰ David J. Kalupahana, Buddhist Philosophy (Hawaii, 1976), p. 52.

¹¹ K. N. Jayatilleke, The Message of the Buddha, edited by Nivien Smart (London, 1975), p. 82.

¹² D. J. Kalupahana and Kōyu Tamura, 'Antarābhava' in G. P. Malalasekera, Encyclopedia op cit. p. 731.

¹³ Rhys Davids & Stede op. cit., p. 163; see also e. g., Dīgha Nikāya II, 63.

¹⁴ Majjhima Nikāya, I, 258.

¹⁵ Ibid.

- ¹⁶ Majjhima Nikāya, I, 426.
- ¹⁷ Kalupahana & Kōyu op. cit., p. 731.
- ¹⁸ David J. Kalupahana, Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (foreword by Eliot Deutsch (Hawaii, 1975), esp pp. 60-61.
- ¹⁹ L. Feer (ed.); C. A. F. Rhys Davids and F. L. Woodward (trans.), The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Samyutta Nikāya), vol. III, p. 157 (SN II, xxiii, pp. 190-191).
- ²⁰ DeSilva op. cit., pp. 83-84.
- ²¹ P. F. Strawson, Individuals (London, 1959), p. 55.
- ²² A frequently recurring phrase in the Canon. See Kalupahana, Buddhist Philosophy pp. 21-22; 70 on memory and verification.
- ²³ Strawson op. cit., p. 116.
- ²⁴ Terence Penelhum, Survival and Disembodied Consciousness (London, 1970), p. 91.
- ²⁵ O. H. de A. Wijesekera, 'Vedic Gandharva and Pali Gandhabba' in University of Ceylon Review vol. III, no. 1, 1945, p. 89.
- ²⁶ Stewart R. Sutherland, review of H. D. Lewis, The Self and Immortality (London, Macmillan, 1973) in Mind vol. LXXXV no. 337, January 1976, p. 143. I am indebted to Sutherland for several remarks which are incorporated into the discussion from p. 126 (last paragraph) to p. 128 (top).

Chapter 5: Mind and Verification

The structure of this chapter is, in section I to discuss the roles of saddhā ('confidence', 'faith'), in II abhiññā ('higher kinds of knowledge and psychic powers') and evidence, and in III the Buddhist empiricism thesis. It is informed by the conviction that the understanding of these topics is interrelated and that this sequence facilitates understanding better than, say, reversing sections I and II would. For if one begins with a view of early Buddhism as epistemological philosophy, then certain uses of saddhā may be ignored as anomalous data which do not fit the pre-conceived view. In section III some questions posed earlier ((i), (ii), and (iii), p. 117) concerning the status of rebirth are considered in the light of the results of this chapter.

I

In discussing the roles of saddhā the issues of the relation between confidence and learning the doctrine, between confidence and practical results, and the interpretation of amūlikā saddhā and ākāraṇā saddhā are crucial.¹

To begin with the relation between confidence and learning the doctrine, consider MN III, 33 (MLS III, 85):

When I heard the doctrine I gained faith in the Tathāgata and MN II 176 (MLS II 365):

If faith is born, then he approaches.

The first might be viewed (mistakenly) as support for the notion that saddhā is only consequent to checking. Not only is it confidence in the Tathāgata (rather than in the doctrine specifically) which results, but this quotation is balanced by others like the second in which saddhā is prior to investigation. From an epistemological perspective, therefore, saddhā sometimes precedes and is not

always consequent to checking the doctrine.

It is also illuminating to see saddhā from a pragmatic perspective, in terms of whether it follows or precedes practical realization on the path. On the one hand, considering learning elephant riding and handling the goad (which are compared with becoming a Buddhist adept) it is said (MN.II 94, MLS II 281):

Had he no faith he could not attain whatever is to be won by faith.

In this context saddhā is one of the five qualities (pañca vasāni) for making progress on the path, and is prior to achieving results. In the same vein is the Saṃyutta Nikāya passage where development of abhiññā depends on saddhā.²

On the other hand, saddhā comes after getting results, after hearing the doctrine. 'Be a dīpa (lamp, island) for yourself,' the trainee is urged, and do not accept anything on report, tradition, or hearsay, but because you have known and seen it yourself.³

Saddhā is one of the five powers which taken together define the Arahant when they are fully developed. Having a proper degree of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and insight is to have the necessary and sufficient conditions for becoming an Arahant.⁴ But in addition to this sort of usage of saddhā as an indriya (faculty) as in the phrase 'the moral sense of faith', it also occurs in expressions like 'walking according to faith' and 'living in faith'.⁵

A very different usage is exemplified in the story of the wanderer, Māgandiya, proud of his health, who is told by the Buddha that such pride is like being taken in by a confidence man. Being proud of one's health is compared to 'confidence in the man with vision' (i. e., the trickster) who offers a greasy, grimy, coarse robe as if it were a lovely, unstained, pure, white cloth.⁶ The word used is saddhā, and thus one finds that saddhā is not always regarded

as a good thing.

Elsewhere in the Majjhima Nikāya, however, there is a clear contrast between: 'a good man has faith' and 'a bad man is lacking in faith'.⁷ Saddhā is here used with a pro-attitude, as in the five qualities usage. There are degrees of saddhā, as the difference between those 'with only a little faith, with only a little regard' and those 'who have gone forth from home into homelessness without faith, who are crafty' shows.⁸ The latter is contrasted with the phrase, those who have 'gone forth from home into homelessness through faith in me'.⁹ When saddhā is used as a virtue it is linked to moral habits involving certain attitudes as in the 'young men of family who have faith and are of great enthusiasm, of great joyousness and who, having heard this, focus their minds on suchness'.¹⁰ That moral habit is seen as an important way of developing saddhā as a virtue is clear in the emphasis given to family background, 'he who comes from a family that has no faith' being at an initial, though not necessarily final, disadvantage.¹¹

The 'object' or focus of saddhā may be the Buddha, the doctrine, or the Order of monks. Sometimes these are mentioned singly, and sometimes in combination, although there is no one of them which is always present in descriptions of the object of faith.¹²

There is no evidence of a division among the uses of saddhā such that confidence in the doctrine is a primary use and the others of lesser importance. For there are affective rather than cognitive uses like 'if faith is born, then he approaches' in order to hear the doctrine. Although it would be a mistake to over-emphasize a single strand of the complex concept as more important than all others, there are some passages which suggest the over-riding importance of saddhā in the Tathāgata, for example:¹³

If he has enough faith in the Tathagata, enough regard, then he will have these things, that is to say the faculty of faith, the faculty of energy, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. This, monks, is called the person who is striving after faith.

If it is correct to assume that the second occurrence of saddhā here, as in 'the faculty of faith', refers to doctrine, then one consequence of sufficient faith in the Tathāgata is faith in the doctrine. Taken in this way, the passage depicts the former as the source or pre-condition of the latter. I mention this passage not to argue for one usage of saddhā as primary in general, but to offset the undue weight given to ākāravatī saddhā (Jayatilleke: 'rational faith').¹⁴

Jayatilleke calls attention to a distinction presented in the Majjhima Nikāya between confidence based on checking some points of the doctrine by acquiring 'knowledge and vision' (which is called 'rational faith', MN I 320), and the 'baseless faith' (amūlikā saddhā) which the brahmins are said to have had toward the Vedas. Now it is important that he calls attention to this distinction, and although he shows awareness that there are many strands to the concept of saddhā, yet in his attempt to give an account of the concept, a reductionistic account in terms of propositional belief emerges according to which all uses telescope into the cognitive strand.¹⁵

(659) The object of saddhā in the Nikāyas is most frequently the Buddha. The favourite phrase is 'having heard his doctrine he acquired faith in the Tathāgata' (taṃ dhammaṃ sutvā Tathāgate saddham paṭilabhati, M. I. 179, 267, 344; M. III. 33). If saddhā means 'belief', 'acquiring faith in the Buddha' is equivalent to saying 'believing in the Buddha' and what is meant by believing in the Buddha is that one believes that what the Buddha says is true. As Woosley points out, 'certainly we do talk of believing in a person but there we mean that we believe that what he says is true.' The verb, paśīdati, 'to have faith in, appreciate' also has the person of the Buddha as the object (e. g. Satthari paśīdim, M. I. 320) but paśāda - in the compound aveccappasāda - (v. supra, 655) frequently has the Buddha,

his teaching (Dhamma) and his Order (Sangha) as the objects. Here 'faith' or belief in the Dhamma means the statements that constitute the Dhamma or the teachings of the Buddha. Likewise, believing in the Sangha implies believing in the truth of the utterances of the Sangha; since these were more or less derived from the Buddha, it again ultimately implies a belief in the statements of the Buddha.

The third sentence above in particular states that believing in the Buddha and believing that what the Buddha says is true are equivalent. What Jayatilleke is doing here is giving an account of saddhā such that all its uses are parasitic upon its cognitive use. There are two major difficulties with this attempt. First, it is mistaken to suppose (with Woozley) that believing in a person is tantamount to believing that what he says is true. For as Mitchell's parable of the Stranger shows, belief in a person sometimes occurs even where it is recognized that the person says things that are false. Secondly, even if this supposition of equivalence were philosophically defensible, it would not be factually correct to think that in early Buddhism the cognitive sense of saddhā is primary or fundamental. For prior to knowing the doctrine saddhā is sometimes important, as in 'if faith is born, then he approaches' and 'had he no faith he could not attain whatever is to be won by faith'. There is thus an affective element in saddhā which is ignored if one treats believing in the Buddha as equivalent to believing that what he says is true.

Unfortunately Jayatilleke's attendance at some of Wittgenstein's lectures does not help him to avoid the 'craving for generality' that underlies his search for a basic, general meaning of saddhā as cognitive. Seeing the futility of this search has implications for the Buddhist empiricism thesis to be discussed in III, and facilitates a clearer view of the next topic, abhiññā and evidence, in II.

II

In 'St. Paul's Damascus Experience' Stewart Sutherland drives a kind of Humean line against interpreting unusual experiences as evidence for religious belief. He argues for the view that¹⁶

Initially and fundamentally a religious experience is characterized as such in the light of the role which it plays in the life of the individual in question, rather than in the light of any unusual perceptions, 'or celestial fireworks display which may accompany that experience.

The conclusion results from a consideration of two possibilities regarding religious experience, and in particular, St. Paul's Damascus road experience, as to whether or not there being divergent accounts of such an experience matters for understanding religious belief. A skeletal paraphrase of the argument might be that, where p means 'God spoke to Saul', there are three possibilities: p is denied, p is taken as equivocally true, and p is taken as univocally true. All of these responses take it as obvious that divergent accounts of the experience matter, but Sutherland argues that certain common features of these responses imply¹⁷

a view of faith in which the role given to religious experience is that of justifying or providing grounds for belief. The authenticity or credibility of faith then rests upon the validity of the claim to have had authoritative or credible religious experience.

And this, the argument continues, results in a cleavage between religious life and belief on the one hand, and a somehow isolated religious experience on the other. Thus, since the hypothesis that divergent accounts of religious experience matter for understanding religious belief has led to this absurdity, Sutherland examines the alternative concerning St. Paul, favoring the view 'that the discrep-

ancies in the three accounts of St. Paul's experience are not significant.¹⁸

Sutherland's movement from a Christo-centric consideration of religious experience on the road to Damascus to 'general conclusions' about 'our understanding of the nature of religious experience' may be questioned by those who are not convinced by the force of a single example, however central that example may be to Christianity.¹⁹ In what follows I propose to examine religious experience under the bodhi tree on the bank of the river Nerañjarā in order to see if corroboration of the general conclusion is available in Buddhism.

As far as 'celestial fireworks' and the like are concerned the Buddha is depicted as warning against using magical tricks in order to gain converts. And, as Jayatilleke cleverly puts it,²⁰

he speaks of the dangers of performing wonders and of thought reading in public, while speaking in praise of 'the miracle of instruction' (anusāsanipāṭi hāriyam, D. I. 214), which in fact was instruction without a miracle.

Further, that enlightenment in early Buddhism is not just a momentary psychological state of a trivial sort but one which is explained by reference to beliefs is evident from the Udāna passage allegedly uttered just after Buddha's enlightenment:²¹

When, indeed, things appear
To the brahman in deep reflection,
All his doubts disappear
As he understands their causal nature.

Two points of agreement between the Damascus road and the Nerañjarā river experiences emerge: first, the experiences are not just titillations of individual awareness in a dramatic way, but involve a change in beliefs. Secondly, this change in beliefs is marked by actions which show conviction that the path is right.

The first point, change in beliefs, might be considered the religious analogue to paradigm shift in science. Basil Mitchell²² remarks:

when a choice has to be made between high-level scientific theories or paradigms, the choice cannot be determined wholly by observation or by strict rules of logic; for both the rival paradigms are logically in order and both have access to the same observations and can give an account of them.

Historically viewed early Buddhism emerges out of a context in which the Buddha had utilized Hindu meditation techniques common at the time. Yet it is also said that the Buddha did not rest content with the teachings of his mentors, Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta.²³ As an important addition to their views he added the sixth abhinna: knowledge of the destruction of defilements (āsavas) which keep one within the cycle of birth and death.

Of the Hindu sages who meditated, some claimed that the ātman is perceivable. While one strand of Upaniṣadic talk about ātman regards it as perceivable, another regards it as unknowable. It is a curious fact that in the early dialogues Buddha never encounters anyone who actually claims to have seen the ātman. It is speculative as to whether this is due more to careful editing by the Buddhists who compiled the Pali Canon or to the availability of a meditator willing to make such a bold claim. There is a conceptual difficulty with what an experience would be like so as to guarantee that the attribute of permanence applies to a soul substance allegedly known through introspection. And according to the Buddhist paradigm it is clear that there is no room for ātman.

It is well-known that the Buddha rejected both the eternalist and annihilationist views. The rejection of the former is a rejection of

ātmavāda, soul theory, in any formulation -- particularly the concept of a permanent thing which it involves. This does not of course rule out the stream of consciousness view of rebirth, for the stream is, like everything else in the world, viewed as impermanent. The rejection of annihilationism is, I submit, a rejection of Cārvāka ('materialism') in its denial of kamma (action) having an effect in another life (whether understood in Hindu or in Buddhist terms of continuity). If my suggestion is correct, then it is a mistake to think that the Buddha's rejection of annihilationism is a rejection of the idea that 'final enlightenment' (parinibbāna) is extinction. But this way of putting the matter leaves open the problem of interpreting 'the deathless' (amata) as an attribute of enlightenment, a problem which I shall take up in Ch. 6.

As there are different points of view from which Buddhism may be described, there are accordingly different doctrines which may appear as central. I do not want to make any claim about what the 'central philosophy' of Buddhism is, but to say that to take two examples, causality and rebirth, either can show that the early Buddhist position is different from pre-existing tradition. Clearly the early Buddhist view of rebirth is distinctive. E. J. Thomas, however, comes all too close to stating that the Buddha says only what the Hindus had been saying all along about rebirth and karma, when he claims that Buddhism 'inherited' these views.²⁴ At a sufficiently lofty level of generality, of course, one might claim that Buddhist and Hindu views are 'the same' in holding that 'we will live on, unless liberated', but this move is useless for understanding the distinctive contributions of each.

I would like now to return and develop the second point of agreement between Damascus road and Nerañjarā bank, that is,

that the change in beliefs precedes a change of life. On Sutherland's
 view of the Damascus road experience²⁵

to understand the significance of that experience -- what makes it religious -- is to grasp the role which it plays in the life of the believer. The experience modifies how he sees his life, how he behaves, and so on, and in parallel fashion the way in which he sees the experience in question may alter in the light of his developing biography. The attempt to understand a particular experience in the absence of at least some access to the subsequent biography is doomed to produce a distorted picture.

It would be tempting to say that Buddha and St. Paul are not on a parity in the way the Buddha and Christ are with respect to carrying out vs. inventing the path. But it must be remembered that, simplistic textbooks and bhakti cult deviations aside,²⁶ the Buddha Gotama is not regarded as the Founder of Buddhism -- only as a pathfinder in this eon. The belief is that there were previous Buddhas, and that more are to come. Since the dhamma is eternal, it is only from a very much more restricted time-span than is operative in early Buddhism, that Gotama is the Founder. Historically viewed against the backdrop of Hindu culture, Buddhism appears as a new religion, and yet the lineage claimed goes beyond recorded history. Therefore it cannot be accurately maintained that whereas Buddha invented a path, Paul was converted to an already existing one, as a basis for excluding their comparison.

In both the careers of Buddha and St. Paul after their most important religious experiences, a conviction which changes their lives is apparent in each case. Buddha claims an insight into things as they really are (yathā bhūtaṃ) and Paul insists that his doctrine is revealed and is no mere human invention. I do not think that religious experience necessarily results in a change of life. It might be impossible to tell what would have resulted if there were no religious experience, in which case one cannot

attribute the change specifically to the religious experience. Also, having a religious experience might result in a confirmation of existing behavior patterns rather than a change in them, in cases where the patterns were already close to a religious ideal.

But even in the case of religious experience functioning to confirm, rather than to change, behavior patterns, having the experience matters in the person's life. It matters even if one does not know what would have happened without it, since the individual takes it as revelatory of reality itself. Sartre has said that there are no omens, or, if there are, it is we as individuals who choose what they must mean.²⁷ What Sartre's point reminds us is that no religious person may deny responsibility for his choosing a path on the grounds that the truth appeared to him in a flash. Even though Buddha and St. Paul claim that their experiences inevitably and certainly must be interpreted as they do, their holding this does not make the experience objective in the sense that a tape-recorder and television would report the event in the same way they interpret it. In contrast to mechanical reports, reports of religious experience are obviously the expression of human experiences which matter in life.

Next I would like to discuss the relationship between rationality and following rules on the one hand, and between checking points of doctrine and 'rational faith' on the other. It is tempting to think that saddhā in early Buddhism must, as an a priori point, conform to a 'consequent to checking' pattern if it is to be 'rational', in line with the Buddhist empiricism thesis also emphasized by Jayatilleke. The conclusion would then be irresistible that since it does not always so conform (as section I shows), it is not always 'rational'. But since rationality is not always a matter of following pre-conceived rules, as Mitchell points out, there is no need for

a set of rules with which to check points of doctrine in order for saddhā to be rational.²⁸ Consequently it does not follow that those instances which do not conform to the 'consequent to checking' pattern are less than rational. A corollary of this view is that there is no primary occurrence (vs. secondary) which is taken to be the more rational type of occurrence.

Now the time is right to introduce the topic of abhiññā and evidence. A crucial difference between the ancient Cārvāka and Buddhists is expressed by Jayatilleke thus:²⁹

(285) The Materialist condemnation of the Vedic tradition, as we have shown above, was absolute. According to them the authors of the Vedas were both utterly ignorant as well as vicious; they are called 'buffoons, knaves and demons' (v. supra, 121) but the Buddhists held that the original seers who were the authors of the Vedas merely lacked a special insight (abhiññā) but did not doubt their honesty or virtue. . . .

Here the importance of the abhiññā to early Buddhism is evident. Its relevance to an issue of major philosophical significance, that of the nature of religious belief, becomes clear when seen as a key concept in all those studies which favor seeing early Buddhism as a form of empiricism. According to this view abhiññā supply the evidence on the basis of which points of doctrine can be confirmed. Part of the initial plausibility of this view derives from the lack of a detailed examination of saddhā and the consequent failure to notice that saddhā is not always consequent to checking. But the view of early Buddhism as grounded on evidence provided by those who take the time and effort to master abhiññā is a very important one in that it raises the question of whether religious belief can rise or fall with the evidence. Colin Lyas thinks that, as far as Christian belief is concerned, it could not, and holds his position³⁰

if true to entail certain ways of establishing beliefs are suspect

when applied to the case of religious belief in God. That is why I say that as we use the term religion, a religious belief in God could not rise or fall with the evidence. I feel that the only way to undermine that entailment is to show that what I have said about religion is not true.

Earlier in the same symposium Norman Malcolm says that religious belief waxes and wanes, but not with the evidence. On this point he and Lyas are agreed. Could early Buddhism rightly be considered an example of a religion which does 'undermine that entailment' in providing an example of a religious position on which belief is regarded as appropriate only insofar as it is supported by evidence? The following examination of abhiññā³¹ will be helpful in answering this question.

In early Buddhism the abhiññā are:

1. iddhividha (psychokinesis)
2. dibbasota (clairaudience)
3. cetopariyañāṇa (telepathy)
4. pubbenivāsanussatiñāṇa (retrocognition)
5. dibbacakkhu (clairvoyance)
6. āsavakkhayañāṇa (knowledge of the destruction of defilements or āsavas)

Concerning these Jayatilleke says:³²

Of the six only three are necessary for the saving knowledge. The first is retrocognition with which he verifies the fact of pre-existence (v. supra, 754). The second is clairvoyance, with which he verifies the fact of karma (v. supra, 755). The third is the 'knowledge of the destruction of the defiling impulses' (āsavāṇaṃkhaṇāṇa, M. I. 348). With this he verifies the Four Noble truths (loc. cit.).

Hence the importance of becoming a 'three-fold knowledge' (tisso vijjā) adept. Not everyone who tries can attain this easily, and one passage mentions that only 60 were successful out of a group of 500.³³ As to why some monks can attain the 'three-fold knowledge' and are consequently 'freed by mind' (cetovimutti), while others cannot but instead are 'freed by insight (or wisdom')

(paññāvimutti) the answer is given that this is due to a difference in their abilities (indriyavemattatam).³⁴ For the one freed by paññā Jayatilleke observes:³⁵

The doctrine of rebirth and karma and the greater part of the theory of Buddhism would have had to be accepted on faith by such a person since he did not have within him or develop the power of verifying them. This explains the conception of the saint with faith (saddhā) in the Pali Canon....

It is still open to the advocate of 'Buddhist empiricism' to argue that in principle, even though not always in practice, kamma and punabbhava are verifiable.

Rather than raise conceptual and empirical difficulties at the outset about any of the abhiññā in particular, it is assumed for the sake of argument that these terms have some meaning in order to go on to raise the question of what verification is supposed to be here. At Dīgha Nikāya I 81 a passage cited by Jayatilleke runs³⁶

I was in such a place with such a personal and family name, such a status, having such and such food, such and such experiences and such a term of life. Dying there I was born in such and such a place; there too I had such a name...
Dying there I was born here.

This is compared to someone visiting various villages recalling details of the journey. It also shows a point not emphasized by Jayatilleke, that retrocognition here concerns one's own case in contrast to clairvoyance which, he continues³⁷

Is directed towards gaining a knowledge of the decease and survival of beings and acquiring an understanding of karma: 'With his clear paranormal clairvoyant vision he sees beings dying and being reborn, the low and the high, the fair and the ugly, the good and the evil, each according to his karma...'. ~~It is also by its~~ means that one sees contemporaneous events beyond the ken of normal vision.

It is important to notice that the quotation is not about all beings including oneself, but about other beings. By clairvoyance, their

rebirth in accordance with a moral order concerning action (kamma) is supposed to be known. Keeping the underlined features in mind one turns to Jayatilleke's remark a few pages later that retro-cognition 'verifies the fact of pre-existence' and clairvoyance 'verifies the fact of karma'.³⁸

The inaccuracy should now be apparent. The distinction is not between faculties verifying respective doctrines as Jayatilleke thinks. The texts he mentions shows a distinction that goes unmentioned viz., that one difference between retrocognition and clairvoyance is that the ~~former~~ concerns my own case and the latter that of other beings recognized in the Buddhist world view. Rebirth is thought to be seen in both precognitive and clairvoyant experience, so that 'the fact of pre-existence' is not verified exclusively by retrocognition. That kamma affects other beings is what is taken to distinguish clairvoyant experience here.

Concerning the last of the 'three-fold knowledge', Jayatilleke cites D. I 84 where suffering, its cause, cessation and the path to its cessation (i. e., the 'four noble truths') as well as the defilements, their cause, cessation, and path to their cessation (knowledge of the destruction of defilements) are known. But he links this discussion to anumāna which he translates 'inference' and anvaye nāṇam translated as 'inductive knowledge'. Anumāna is not just inference in general, however, although commonly translated as such, but is of the 'just as... so too...' analogical type. And anvaya (in anvaye nāṇam) has no specific meaning of induction, but when used with nāṇa means 'logical conclusion of' according to the PTS dictionary. Jayatilleke's use of the term 'induction' is exemplified as follows:³⁹

In the Saṃyutta Nikāya are described a number of causally correlated phenomena such as that 'with the arising of birth

there is the arising of decay and death, and with the cessation of birth there is the cessation of decay and death', etc. (jāti-samudayā jarāmarāṇasamudayo jātinirodhā jarāmarāṇa nirodho ... S. II. 57). Knowing these causal correlations or sequences is called 'the knowledge of phenomena' (dhamme ñāṇam, S. II. 58). Then it is said, 'This constitutes the knowledge of phenomena; by seeing, experiencing, acquiring knowledge before long and delving into these phenomena, he draws an inference (nayam neti) with regard to the past and the future (atitanagate, loc., cit.) as follows: 'All those recluses and brahmins who thoroughly understood the nature of decay and death, its cause, its cessation and the path leading to the cessation of decay and death did so in the same way as I do at present; all those recluses and brahmins who in the future will thoroughly understand the nature of decay and death... will do so in the same way as I do at present -- this constitutes his inductive knowledge (idam assa anvaye nanam, loc. cit.).'

This is an argument from what is true in my own case now using certain procedures of checking to what is true irrespective of time (in past and future) for others using the same procedures. Thus, it has an analogical quality not covered just by calling it inductive.

To sum up, retrocognition is taken to reveal punabbhava in my own case, clairvoyance to reveal punabbhava and kamma in other beings' cases and the knowledge of the destruction of āsavas to reveal that what is true in my own case now is true in the past and the future for others using similar procedures. This can be said on the basis of textual evidence. But there is no basis for going further to say that these faculties verify the doctrines of rebirth and action in the strong, usual empiricist sense of 'verify' according to which falsification must be in principle possible. There is an ambiguity in the expression 'rebirth doctrine'. If taken as view in the sense of picture, in full recognition of there being no propositional sense here, then of course Buddhists have a 'doctrine'. But if taken as a theory to be defended with argument, in view of the condemnation of diṭṭhi as speculative view, there is no early

Buddhist doctrine in that sense. It is well-known that theories of the relation between soul and body were set aside, as well as speculation on the state of the Tathāgata. This shows the unwillingness to become 'entangled' in a specific philosophical theory of rebirth.

What of the possibility that 'knowledge and vision' (ñāṇa) dassana) might play an analogous role to 'verify' in English. Consider:⁴⁰

It is in the nature of things (dhammatā) that a person in the state of (meditative) concentration knows and sees what really is. A person who knows and sees what really is, does not need to make an effort of will to feel disinterested and renounce. It is in the nature of things that a person who knows and sees as it really is, feels disinterested and renounces. One who has felt disinterested and has renounced does not need an effort of will to realize the knowledge and insight of emancipation (vimutti-ñāṇadassanaṃ). It is in the nature of things that one who has felt disinterested and renounced, realizes the knowledge and insight of emancipation.

Here, however, there is no mention of kamma, punabbhava or any other specific doctrine being known and seen.

There are cases where 'knowing and seeing' refers to knowledge of physical objects, as when a man cannot know and see his face in water due to the water's turbulent surface. Thus knowledge and vision is not always applied to religious concepts in the Buddhist texts. On the other hand, Jayatilleke emphasizes its religious application in saying:⁴¹

Now it is said that 'the decease and survival of beings is to be verified by one's (clairvoyant) vision' (sattānaṃ cutūpapāto ... cakkhunā sacchikaraṇīyo, A. II. 183). But with this clairvoyant vision one is also said to notice a correlation between the character of a person and his state of survival.

The crucial word in Pali, sacchikatvā ('verified', 'seen') takes an emphatic (yo) form here as sacchikaraṇīyo. It is prima facie

odd that this word has not been one of the Pali terms often used in English language expositions of the Buddhist empiricism line. Sacca means 'true' or 'correct' (it does not distinguish between propositional/ontological), and katvā, 'made' or 'established'. 'True' is here not used as a property of a proposition, but as a property of utterance, congruent with the findings of Ch. 3. Since the concern of logical empiricism or positivism is with the meaning and verification of propositions (and often, the possibility in principle of falsification is emphasized), the concern of early Buddhism with sacca cannot be the same. Eo ipso, sacchikarāṇiyo cannot refer to verification in the positivist's sense. Now it can be surmised why none in the Buddhist empiricism tradition of interpretation make much of sacchikatvā or its related forms: their Pali scholarship was too good to let them fall into the trap of interpreting the term as relating to propositions. Perhaps they realized that there is no term for 'proposition' in early Buddhism. But one must not let this crucial term pass unnoticed, and once its usage is understood, all talk of verifying propositions is ruled out.

This by itself is not, however, a sufficient argument to eliminate the Buddhist empiricism thesis, because it might be argued that even without 'the logician's notion of proposition' (which itself is not entirely free of difficulties in philosophy of logic), there may still be, and have historically been, empiricist positions. While this reply is correct, it is of no avail against the following further considerations.

Leaving aside all claims of comparison with logical empiricism for which the notion of proposition is essential, the more restricted comparison to some form of empiricism which does not involve a notion of proposition has yet to account for the in principle falsifica-

bility of a 'view'. This may be seen clearly in section III when my 'parable of the bhikkhu' is presented.

The following remarks are intended as a transition to section III where some further considerations against the Buddhist empiricism thesis are presented. Whether Tathāgatas arise or not the dhamma is eternal -- this saying shows that the truth of a doctrinal 'view' is never regarded as contingent on man's realization: although checking is not irrelevant, it takes on a different sense from checking a proposition or hypothesis. The investigation takes the general form: P examines religion X to see if there is anything in it for him. Religious texts and believers typically make the claim that something is indeed 'in it', whether the merely curious can see it or not. This should not obscure the fact that 'religious discovery' is at least partly a matter of what the investigator is, what he 'brings with him' to the search.

If my line of thinking is correct, then it is a mistake to think that there is a body of propositions which can be rightly labeled 'religious knowledge', in a sense even roughly analogous to scientific knowledge. Unlike 'religious knowledge', there may indeed be 'religious wisdom', but if there is, it is to be found embodied in the lives of religious people, and as with 'philosophical wisdom' cannot be defined in a set of propositions but is embodied in practices. Unlike knowledge, wisdom is thus necessarily spared the indignity of becoming a commodity.

¹On the last mentioned distinction see K. N. Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge (London, Allen & Unwin, 1963), p. 393.

²Samyutta Nikāya II, XII, 23, 9, 'yathābhūtañāṇadassanan'.

³Gradual Sayings III, 7, 65.

⁴Samyutta Nikāya V, 204 (Kindred Sayings V, 180)

⁵Rhys Davids and Stede, op. cit., p. 675.

⁶Majjhima Nikāya (M. N.) I, 509); Middle Length Sayings (MLS) II, 189. The translation in MLS has 'faith'.

⁷Cf. M. N. III, 23 (MLS III, 73); M. N. III, 21 (MLS III, 71).

⁸M. N. I, 444: 'pema' as 'regard or affection'. M. N. III, 6 (MLS III, 56).

⁹M. N. I, 463 (MLS II, 135).

¹⁰M. N. I, 465 (MLS II, 138).

¹¹M. N. II, 185. 'Faith is the seed (bīja)', Kindred Sayings I, 217.

¹²Vide M. N. I, 67 for saddhā in Buddha and dhamma only, M. N. I, 57 for saddhā in dhamma by itself, and M. N. I, 479 for saddhā in the Tathāgata.

¹³M. N. I, 479 (MLS II, 154).

¹⁴Jayatilleke, ibid., p. 373.

¹⁵Jayatilleke, ibid., p. 389.

¹⁶Stewart R. Sutherland, 'St. Paul's Damascus Experience' in Sophia (1975, p. 15). Not all points here are Humean, however,

e. g., the unusual experiences themselves do not weigh against the credibility of witness contra Hume.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 13

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁰ Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 324; Dīgha Nikāya I, 212-213.

²¹ Udāna, p. 1.

²² Basil Mitchell, The Justification of Religious Belief (London, Macmillan, 1973), p. 91. He then goes on to argue that rational choice is still possible here, for there is no need to think that reasoning is necessarily in accordance with rules which vary from one system to another.

²³ David J. Kalupahana, Buddhist Philosophy (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1976), p. 7. Kalupahana's way of understanding the distinctiveness of the Buddhist view of āsavas is helpful.

²⁴ E. J. Thomas, A History of Buddhism (London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1971 edition), p. 13.

²⁵ Sutherland, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁶ Vide B. M. Barua, 'Faith in Buddhism' in Bimala C. Law, Buddhistic Studies (Calcutta, Thacker, 1931). He observes that the commentator Buddhaghosa defines faith in such a way as to being it close to the Hindu concept of bhakti (p. 332).

²⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre: 'No general ethics can show you what is to be done; there are no omens in the world. The Catholics will reply, "But there are." Granted -- but, in any case, I myself choose the meaning they have'. Cited in E. Sprague and P. Taylor (eds.), Knowledge and Value (New York, Harcourt, 1967), pp. 612-3.

²⁸ Mitchell, ibid.

²⁹ Jayatilleke, ibid., p. 188.

³⁰ S. C. Brown (ed.), Reason and Religion (Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 178.

³¹Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 438 presents a roughly similar schema.

³²Ibid., p. 466.

³³Ibid., p. 467.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 440.

³⁷Ibid., p. 441.

³⁸Ibid., p. 466.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 442-443.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 420-421.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 460.

III

In what follows I argue for two inter-related theses: (1) that early Buddhism is not a form of empiricism, and (2) that consequently there is no basis for an early Buddhist apologetic which contrasts an empirical early Buddhism with either a metaphysical Hinduism on the one hand, or with a baseless Christianity on the other.

Here 'early Buddhism' is understood as the Buddhism of the five Nikāyas. And 'empiricism' is understood as a theory of knowledge which holds that some (on a weak view) or all (on a strong view) knowledge or the materials of knowledge is either derived from sense experience or is in some sense dependent on sense experience. The link between this section and the interpretation of kamma and punabbhava is important in that these two concepts are sometimes interpreted as part of an empirical theory of survival.

. . . .

A distinguished group of Pali Buddhist scholars, notably K. N. Jayatilleke and his former students, David J. Kalupahana and Gunapala Dharmasiri, have interpreted early Buddhism as an empirical viewpoint. Jayatilleke holds that early Buddhism is a sort of empiricism.¹ Kalupahana picks up this line and applies it in order to contrast an empirical early Buddhism with a metaphysical Hinduism, and in order to compare early Buddhism with logical positivism.² Dharmasiri also picks up the 'Buddhist empiricism' refrain, but uses it differently in order to contrast a rational, scientific, and empirical orientation in early Buddhism with an irrational, baseless one in Christianity.³

In order to see what sort of case can be made for a 'Buddhist empiricism' some of Jayatilleke's work is particularly relevant,

especially the following passage:⁴

(793) We have tried to show that perception (normal and paranormal) and inductive inference are considered the means of knowledge in the Pali Nikayas. The emphasis that 'knowing' (janam) must be based on 'seeing' (passam) or direct perceptive experience, makes Buddhism a form of Empiricism. We have, however, to modify the use of the term somewhat to mean not only that all our knowledge is derived from sense-experience, but from extrasensory experience as well. This extension we believe is justified in the light of the reasons that we gave earlier (v. supra, 735). The definition of the term in Runes' Dictionary of Philosophy also allows us to use the term 'empiricism' to include the entire conscious content of the mind and not merely the data of the senses: 'That the sole source of knowledge is experience. . . . Experience may be understood as either all conscious content, data of the senses only or other designated content' (s. v.). Its empiricism is also seen in its attitude to the problems of substance (v. supra, 535), cause (v. supra, 778), the a priori (v. supra, 429, 436), perception (v. supra, 744), meaning (v. supra, 536 f.) and lastly metaphysics (v. supra 377 ff.; infra, 816).

As for the reasons which Jayatilleke refers to here as given earlier which he believes justifies the extension of the word 'empiricism' to include early Buddhism, they are: first, that it is held that the data of intuitive experience may be misinterpreted and erroneous inferences drawn from it; secondly, that Buddhism makes no claim about mystical knowledge derived from an unaccountable, allegedly supernatural source, instead basing its knowledge claims on a view of the natural development of mind in accordance with causal processes; thirdly, that it does not regard the content of meditative experience as identical with ultimate reality; and fourthly, that it does not reject normal perception but uses it as did the Materialists as a basis for drawing many of its conclusions. In the discussion which follows I am not going to question whether these reasons, taken in themselves, are acceptable, but instead to

question whether it follows from them that it is a justifiable extension of the word 'empiricism' to have it cover early Buddhism. For it may be that there are other considerations in the light of which one would not accept such an extension, regardless of whether or not one accepts Jayatilleke's reasons here.

Aligning early Buddhism with empiricism may be seen from the point of view of Buddhist apologetics to offer some advantages. Both the prestige of science and the popularity in the West of empiricism might be harnessed in support of an ancient way of life. But from the viewpoint of philosophy of religion and of accuracy to the Pali texts, this sort of view is prima facie open to suspicion. It surfaces recently as the background for Gunapala Dharmasiri's interesting work, A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God. Here Dharmasiri continues the tradition of his late mentor, K. N. Jayatilleke, and goes on to attack theism as baseless in contrast to an empirical early Buddhism.

At the heart of Jayatilleke's conception of 'Buddhist empiricism' and that of his former students, Kalupahana and Dharmasiri, is the notion that it is a justifiable extension of the word 'empiricism' to have it cover the mind as a sixth sense where this concept of mind includes abhiññā. The abhiññā are variously translated as 'psychic powers' and (less grammatically but more frequently as) 'higher knowledges', to indicate a range of abilities acquired through years of meditation. Some of these abilities, such as retrocognition of past lives, are thought to provide a basis for knowledge claims concerning kamma and rebirth. Above Jayatilleke has observed that 'experience' may mean 'either all conscious content, data of the senses only or other designated content' (following Runes), so that it might seem open to anyone to accept a broad definition of empir-

icism on which 'experience' is understood as including 'all conscious content'. But empiricism cannot be understood in this way, for then it would include e.g., mathematical truths and would not distinguish conceptual truths from empirical ones. The definition in terms of 'all conscious content' thus includes too much. It includes so much, that it would even be tautologous to say, on this view, of any datum at all that it is an empirical one. Nor can one accept the vague phrase 'or other designated content' in a definition of empiricism. Hence, the phrase 'data of the senses' remains, and taken in a very broad manner, according to this conception early Buddhism would be a sort of empiricism based on six 'senses' -- the last of which being the mind! Why not allow such a stipulation?

First, there are textual considerations. Ditthi, which literally means 'view' and very often 'speculative view', was condemned by Buddha, the idea being that his message is not one view among others, not a theory to be argued about but a way of life to be practiced. But empiricism on the other hand is a theory, a theory of knowledge which is opposed to others, especially to rationalism.⁵ As such, empiricism is regarded as tenable by its proponents to the extent that it can be argued for. By contrast, the Buddha's procedure is to present his dogma on the basis of seeing things 'as they really are' (yathā bhūtam) through meditative experience.⁶ Speculation (ditthi) as well as argument and counter-argument (takka) are equally foreign to his approach. This last sentence is common knowledge among Pali scholars, but Jayatilleke, for one, interprets it as if it were a rejection of metaphysics and rationalism respectively in favor of empiricism. Inherent in this sort of view is a picture of Buddha as rejecting two types of philosophy in favor

of another type. This picture is questionable, however, for in rejecting ditthi (views) and takka (argument and counter-argument or logic) he was rejecting philosophy as this term is currently used in Britain and America rather than just certain types of philosophy.

Unfortunately, Jayatilleke fails to see this. After pointing to a text which shows that the Buddha did not regard himself as preaching a doctrine which is the product of reasoning (takka) and speculation (ditthi), he concludes that the Buddha is no rationalist⁷, elsewhere in many places depicting him as an empiricist. As the PTS dictionary shows, however, the terms takka and ditthi are much wider in scope than these types of philosophy (rationalism and metaphysical speculation), and hence it is not specifically these parts of philosophy that are rejected.

While Jayatilleke is wary of identifying or of closely comparing early Buddhism with a particular form of empiricism and points out a comparison between logical positivism and ancient Indian materialism, Kalupahana by contrast concludes his book, Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, with the paragraph:⁸

All this may lead to the following conclusions. Rejecting an Absolute (such as the Brahman or Atman of the Upanisads) or a transempirical reality, the Buddha confined himself to what is empirically given. Following a method comparable to that adopted by the modern Logical Positivists, he sometimes resorted to linguistic analysis and appeal to experience to demonstrate the futility of metaphysics. As a result of his empiricism he recognized causality as the reality and made it the essence of his teachings. Hence his statement: "He who sees causality sees the dhamma".

If this is the logical conclusion to which the Buddhist empiricism thesis may be pushed, then it is at the same time its reductio

ad absurdum. For the activities and utterances of early Buddhism are religious ones, the 'wordy warfare' of philosophers being purposely avoided in early Buddhism. Although Kalupahana knows this, he would probably insist that insofar as early Buddhism has a way of verifying its knowledge claims it is to that extent empiricist. It has already been noted that there are no notions of proposition and falsification here, making the comparison to logical positivists like Ayer, e. g., dubious. And if, as I suggest in calling attention to the terms diṭṭhi and takka, the texts show a distinction between the method of early Buddhism and the method of philosophy, then neither empiricism, positivism, linguistic analysis, nor any other sort of philosophy can sum up the method of early Buddhism. Further evidence accrues from the consideration of two other Pali concepts, deva and opapātika.

Although propitiating the gods (deva) is out of the question from the early Buddhist point of view, the texts do assume their existence and even modify their character as M. M. J. Marasinghe points out in his book, Gods in Early Buddhism. It is thought that one may be reborn as a deva, man, animal, or inhabitant of niraya (a sort of purgatory). There is also a belief in opapātika births, 'those of spontaneous origin'. Although it is common to all who take a Buddhist empiricism line to view causality as an important doctrine, in the Majjhima Nikāya there is a reference to opapātika births.⁹ Deva and beings in niraya are said to be born in this manner. Neither the belief in such beings nor their somewhat strange manner of arising are easily compatible with the view of Buddhism as empiricism or positivism as these terms are understood in Western thought, nor are they easily compatible with the emphasis given to causality by Kalupahana et al.

Leaving aside Pali textual material for a moment I would like to turn now to some considerations concerning the usual usage of the term 'empiricism'. Typically 'empiricism' is used in contrast to 'rationalism'. Empiricism is a theory of knowledge which holds that some (on a weak view) or all (on a strong view) knowledge or the materials of knowledge is either derived from sense experience or is dependent upon sense experience rather than on reason. On a rather crude interpretation, reasoning is thought of as taking place 'in' the mind, whereas the senses are thought of as quite different in kind from the mind and as the sources of knowledge. The clearest formulation of this unsophisticated version is perhaps in Locke's writings in which the mind is thought of as a blank slate which is written on by means of sense activity. Here there is a contrast of experience on the one side and mind on the other. But in early Buddhism the mind is not envisaged as different in kind from the senses but rather as one gateway alongside the five senses. Hence, Locke's view of 'sensory experience' would be one-sided and unacceptable to the early Buddhist view.

A consideration of 'verifiability' and 'falsifiability' is also relevant to interpreting 'empiricism'. The anti-metaphysical thrust of the verifiability principle as formulated by Ayer, say, seems to require the assumption that our experience cannot be radically different from what it ordinarily is. A proponent of the Buddhist empiricism thesis may argue that, if a Buddhist is confronted with Ayer's contention that one cannot verify the meditator's claims, but only the the claims that meditators have reported certain experiences, then the Buddhist can reply that Ayer is refusing to carry out the requisite meditational practice in order to verify the claim.

But first, meditation-based claims are not always verifiable by those who attempt to check them, as one group of monks who failed to develop the abhiññā and are said to be liberated by insight shows. And secondly, even where verification is in some sense possible, if there is nothing in principle which counts against meditation-based claims, then on a strong notion of verifiability nothing counts for them either. As an illustration of this second point, consider my parable of the bhikkhu:

Two men hear a sermon on Buddhism in which it is characterized as a 'come and see doctrine', not requiring faith in scripture, but confidence in the meditation instructor. They decide to put it to the test. After five years of disciplined meditation under the same teacher, they meet again. The first says: 'I have verified rebirth by seeing the arising and passing away of beings'. The second replies that he has seen no such thing. They resume meditation practice, and after five years the same stalemate is reached. Finally after they had both been meditating for twenty years they return to their teacher, who is by then old and grey. The second man says: 'I have heard that this is a 'come and see' doctrine, but although I came I have not yet acquired knowledge and vision of Buddhist doctrine. Is not the doctrine falsified?' Then comes a great laugh resounding (as if from Zarathustran heights), and following it the words: 'Fool, go and meditate some more!' After the teacher's advice it became clear that the issue is not an experimental one, although each takes his experience as the basis for interpretation. The sceptical bhikkhu thinks: I have had many experiences of meditating without acquiring knowledge and vision of rebirth, for example. So, if the teacher will not allow that any of my experience counts against the rebirth doctrine, then I do not see how anything could count for it either. If you can't falsify it, then you can't verify it either. The believing bhikkhu thought: poor fellow! He does not know and see what I have known and seen. I have verified the doctrine. The skeptical monk left the Order, while the other continued meditating.

Dharmasiri criticizes the theists for not meeting Flew's challenge by specifying which events would falsify belief in God. But when he comes to discuss the meaningfulness of early Buddhist

doctrines, he does not there require the possibility of falsification (in principle) for meaningfulness. Thus one finds a shift in what counts as the requirement for meaningful statements, a shift which enables him to conclude that Christianity is baseless while Buddhism is well-grounded in 'rational understanding, experience and verification'.¹⁰ Moreover, he even arrives at the comparison of the Buddhist path with scientific methodology:¹¹

Thus 'faith' in Buddhism resembles very much the faith a scientist reposes in a particular hypothesis. He has faith that the latter might work because of the credibility and reliability that is suggested by the preliminary observations. Faith in Buddhism works only as a starting point in the scientist's sense and therefore it has necessarily to be replaced later by direct personal knowledge. Consequently, an Arahant is described as 'one devoid of faith' and it is often pointed out that the Arahant must be in a position to claim the highest knowledge without having to rely on faith.

I would submit that the early Buddhist path is not at all like scientific hypothesis and test for precisely the reason that Dhammasiri adduces in the case of Christianity, but fails to apply to early Buddhism. The doctrines of early Buddhism are not falsifiable by any experience, as the parable of the bhikkhu suggests.

In concluding this chapter I would like to consider an objection to the view that no doctrine of early Buddhism is falsifiable. It might be argued that there is at least one falsifiable belief in early Buddhism viz., that there was a man named Siddhārtha Gautama (Pali: Gotama) who attained enlightenment (nibbāna).

Would not this basic Buddhist belief be falsified if it could be shown that no such individual ever lived -- for instance, by the discovery of texts which gave reliable evidence for the view proposed?

There are three different ways of arguing against this which

I sketch as follows. First, take the 'in practice reply'. In practice it would make very little difference to Buddhists in Sri Lanka, for example, if it could be shown that no Gotama Buddha ever lived. What would make a difference is if it could be shown that noone had ever attained the status of Buddhahood, but it is not clear how this could be done. The 'in practice reply' emphasizes that Buddhism is basically a belief that there is a certain path to the eradication of suffering (dukkha), and people could continue to practice it quite independently of the historicity of Gotama. Statues of the Buddha are then interpreted as representing an ideal, and could be ritually used in any event.

The second reply is the 'how conclusive?' query. When it is claimed that it might be shown that no such man ever lived, it may be asked what the evidence would be like such that we would be entitled to conclude this. If it is replied that the evidence would take the form of some recently discovered manuscript, which gives reason to believe that the Pali Canon accounts of the life of Buddha are fabrications, then granting X to be comparatively more reliable, it could nevertheless turn out that at a subsequent time book X_1 would be discovered which negates X's account on the point and is comparatively more reliable to X_1 , and so on, back and forth in an open-ended series. In short, the best of evidence could only ensure a tentative conclusion, and would fall short of anything like conclusive verification.

The third reply is the 'logical status reminder'. Here it is suggested that the logical status of belief in the historicity of Gotama is not that of a doctrine but that of part of the background against which doctrines emerge. The main outlines of Buddhism, expressed in such schemas as the four noble truths, the eight-fold

noble path, the three marks of existence, and the five aggregates constituting a person are stated without necessary reference to the historical Gotama. And if a follower of early Buddhism said something of the form, 'The Buddha said that p', where 'p' is some doctrinal point, then one can take it that: (1) if he knows his Buddhism he is not basing the proposition p on the alleged fact that the historical Gotama stated it, for it is a well-known emphasis that nothing should be accepted on the basis of report, hearsay, or a teacher's testimony (including Gotama's) but on the basis of its being known and seen personally (in the ideal case, leaving the 'freed by insight' aside); (2) even if there were no historical Gotama, p would be regarded as true by Buddhists, since the texts say that the doctrine (dhamma) remains even if there were never any Tathāgata in past, future, or present.

The Buddhist empiricism thesis can best be understood as a form of apologetics for Buddhism. Apologetics admits of greater or lesser degrees of accuracy when viewed as exposition, and its main purpose is to defend and promote a religion. Judged accordingly, the Buddhist empiricism apologetic has met with some success insofar as it has called attention to the earliest recorded stratum of Buddhism. This attention is important in at least two ways. Historically, understanding early Buddhism is the sine qua non for understanding what counts as a change as Buddhism develops. Sociologically, for many educated people who have been exposed to both Eastern and Western cultural influences (especially in Sri Lanka) the attention to the Buddhist empiricism view has been an important way of attempting a synthesis of old and new. But viewed philosophically and with textual considerations in mind, the upshot of this chapter is that the Buddhist empiricism thesis is unsound.

¹K. N. Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge (London, Allen and Unwin, 1964), pp. 463-464.

²D. J. Kalupahana, Buddhist Philosophy (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1976), pp. 3-24, re. metaphysical Hinduism/empirical Buddhism; Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1975), p. 185.

³Gunapala Dharmasiri, A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God (Colombo, Lake House, 1974), pp. 298-299.

⁴Jayatilleke, ibid.

⁵Jayatilleke, ibid., p. 403.

⁶Jayatilleke, ibid., pp. 403-404.

⁷Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 88 and pp. 475-476.

⁸Kalupahana, Causality, ibid.

⁹Majjhima Nikāya I, 73.

¹⁰Dharmasiri, op. cit., p. 299.

¹¹Ibid., p. 291.

Chapter 6: The Deathless (Amata)

The problem of the reidentification of the person across lives discussed in Ch. 4 cannot be solved by appeal to the Buddhist empiricism thesis, as Ch. 5 shows. But in rejecting this thesis it is not being claimed that parinibbāna is a 'transcendent state'. How, then, does one interpret 'the deathless' (amata) in early Buddhism? This is the problem to be solved in the present chapter.

Some writers on early Buddhist 'immortality' see it as easily assimilable to a position they admire, such as Hinduism or Christianity. For example, Radhagovinda Basak writes:¹

It is, indeed, very interesting to find in the Buddhist canons this nirvāṇa described as a-kata (akṛta, the uncreated) and a-mata (amṛta, the immortal), i. e. it is neither created, nor does it ever die. Hence, it may be presumed that it is a siddhāvastu, eternally existing thing, and it may be equated with the Brāhmanic idea of Brahman.

Whether the 'eternally existing thing' is thought of in Hindu or in Christian terms, there is no such thing in Buddhism. This much can be seen already, in the light of Ch. 4, but it is the contention of the present chapter that amata nevertheless has a clear Buddhist meaning. To explain what meaning 'the deathless' has in early Buddhism which is different from the notion of something which never dies (N. B. Basak's way of construing 'eternal'), it is necessary in the first place to look at the texts. In doing so the conventional distinction between nibbāna and parinibbāna is used here, and is defended against a recent attack by Peter Masefield. The argument is developed here on the basis of the texts that amata means 'immortal' in the sense of 'eternal life' and not 'endless life' as these senses of 'immortality' are distinguished in some

contemporary philosophy of religion (N. B. not in Basak's sense). It is also demonstrated how misinterpretations of amata as 'endless life' persist down to the present day in writers like Kalan-suriya.

Gombrich has said²

Scholars have endlessly lucubrated, and are still lucubrating, over what the Buddha meant by his no-soul doctrine; but in so far as they assume his meaning to be something other than what Buddhists have taken him to mean, I consider that they are wasting their time.

Certainly there have been novel, polemical, and even apologetical interpretations of Buddhism. Perhaps even the very word 'Buddhism' specifically the 'ism' of it, have led scholars to think of it as just another 'ism', easily comparable with empiricism, rationalism, idealism or what-have-you. Thinking of it in this way makes it a ditṭhi in the sense of a philosophical view up for argument and counter-argument, and that is a travesty that no clear-thinking Buddhist could accept. Indeed, if this is the sort of thing Gombrich has in mind, as the following ~~quotation~~ suggests, he is being charitable: 'The style of modern exegesis merely replicates the efforts of traditional commentators -- except that it usually does the job less well.'³ In this study no reference to 'what the Buddha meant' is required. For whether there was a historical Gotama Buddha, and whether and to what extent his utterances overlap with those embodied in the Nikāyas are questions which cannot be ascertained beyond any doubt. And if one understands the study of early Buddhism as the study of texts, then expressions like 'what the Buddha meant' have no role to play, unless used as elliptical for 'what the Buddha meant as depicted in the texts'.

Although elucidating the early Buddhist position may make it easier to accept, the concern is not with acceptance but with

understanding, as pointed out in the Introduction. And in making comparisons between what the texts say and what philosophy of religion works say, the comparisons are not regarded as valuable somehow in their own right, nor as causal influence accounts, nor as concealed apologetics to make Buddhism seem respectable (for the view taken is that it is respectable), but only for the sake of understanding. If it turns out that there is some clarity in the Buddhist vision (along with some difficulties), this should not be surprising, nor taken as evidence of apologetic intent. Hence, if the philosophy of religion can on some points aid understanding without doing violence to the texts, the absence of exact Pali equivalents to its distinctions (say, between 'endless' and 'eternal' life as two kinds of 'immortality') will be excusable as a matter of course.

With this methodological reminder concluded, consider some uses of 'amata' in the Nikāya literature. The PTS dictionary characterizes amata as 'the drink of the gods, ambrosia, water of immortality', and in painstaking manner details its usages. What follows is not meant as an exhaustive summary, but is sufficiently developed for present purposes.

'Amata' is used as a synonym for 'nibbāna', and as shorthand for 'the destruction of passion, hatred, and confusion' (rāga, dosa, and moha). There are expressions like knocking at the 'door of the deathless' (dvāra-amata), and knowing the causal relation is sometimes said to be a prerequisite of knocking at ~~that~~ door. The deathless is sometimes characterized as the purification of citta free of grasping, and sometimes it is said that 'purposive thoughts' (saṅkappa-vitakka, A. N. IV 385) are merged in the deathless. Some thoughts are said to be particularly beneficial for attaining the deathless. Also found are expressions like 'plunging into the

deathless', and 'the deathless way to peace', and the 'drum of deathlessness'. 'Amata' is called 'an element', 'security', a 'quarter' (though this last is metaphorical; not spatial), and the Buddha is styled 'giver of the deathless', and 'teaching the deathless path'. Buddhists take the deathless as goal or consummation, and it must be 'seen for oneself'.

'Amata' as end or goal may be a synonym for 'nibbāna', but in some places like the following it is an attribute of nibbāna:⁴

Yathā asaṅkhatam tathā vitthāretabbam tatruddānam
asaṅkhatam antam anāsavam saccañca pāram nipuṇam su-
duddasam anidassanam nippapañca santam amataṃ
paññāñca sivañca khemaṃ taṇhakkhayo acchariyañca
abhutam anītikam anītikadhammam nibbānam etaṃ
sugatena desitaṃ.

K. N. Upadhyaya translates this passage as:⁵

This is the Nibbāna, the uncompounded, the ultimate, free from defilements, the truth, the further shore, the subtle, very difficult to see, the unfading, the stable, the undecaying, the ineffable, the undifferentiated, the peaceful, the deathless, the excellent, the good, the security, destruction of craving, the wonderful, the marvellous, free from ill, the state free from ill, the harmless, the passionless, the purity, the release, the non-attachment, the island, the cave, the protection, the refuge and the goal which the well-accomplished One has taught.

To begin our discussion it is important to distinguish between nibbāna in one's lifetime from nibbāna at death in the case where one will not return (i. e., parinibbāna). The objective is to explain what meaning the deathless has which is different from that of something that never dies, and this turns on the understanding of parinibbāna. Kalansuriya sets out 'two views of nibbāna' and argues for Jayatilleke's notion of nibbāna (perhaps also parinibbāna, though this is unclear), as against Kalupahana's view of parinibbāna as extinction.⁶ In so doing he seems to think that throwing doubt

on the latter's Buddhist empiricism view lends support to his own view. While not agreeing to the Buddhist empiricism thesis, I hope to show that Kalupahana is more nearly correct on the question of extinction, and why, strictly speaking, neither the transcendental state view nor the extinction view is in keeping with Buddhism.

Nowhere in the Nikāya literature does the Buddha assert any view about the afterlife of the Tathāgata. In the discussion of the four-fold logic it was shown in Ch. 2 that the early Buddhist view is to set aside from consideration, but without denying, the four recognized possibilities concerning the Tathāgata. Simply put, there is a refusal to philosophize about the matter, for philosophy is seen as just another source of attachment.

Kalansuriya calls attention to a Saṃyutta passage which is as important as it is occasionally misleading -- one sometimes referred to as 'Yamaka's diṭṭhi'. It reminds one that, rightly stated, the early Buddhist view is not that the Tathāgata is extinct after death, but that the five aggregates are dukkha and are all destroyed on the Tathāgata's death. Yamaka, under questioning by Buddha, changes his tune from the former to the latter characterization. In the English paraphrase there is a problem with 'extinct', since nibbāna is sometimes rendered as 'extinction' where pari-nibbāna is meant, and of course the Buddhists are perfectly willing to say that a Tathāgata may be in parinibbāna. But in the sense in which one commonly uses 'extinction' to mark the going out of existence, the Buddhists do not say that the Tathāgata is extinct. Hence, if one emphasizes the importance of Yamaka's diṭṭhi and ignore others like the Sabbasutta, it may seem as if the door to the deathless wings open to a 'transcendental state' of existence.

In commenting on Yamaka's diṭṭhi Kalansuriya take it that the Buddha (or the Buddhist position) denies the conclusion that 'once

the external object (the external person) ceases to exist, ontologically, nothing exists', and at the end of the day the way to see Buddha's denial that he is an annihilationist is to see him as an eternalist, only not an Upaniṣadic eternalist. An examination of the following citations will bear this out:⁷

To put it yet more explicitly, the dissolution of the aggregation is but the non-existence of the object or person or whatever is referred to. Characteristically, this is the knowledge which comes by way of sense-experience (sense-perception). Once the external object (the external person) ceases to exist, ontologically, nothing exists. It is this conclusion that the Buddha denies, according to the nikāya literature, when he was charged with being an annihilationist with reference to the summum bonum - nibbana, of his teaching. The Buddha claims that he lays down simply a doctrine about anguish and the stopping of anguish and not the cutting off, the destruction and the disappearance of the existent entity. Therefore, we conclude that Kalupahana's reading of the meanings of advanced Western thought into the Dhamma of Buddhism is uncalled for. It is worth being clear about this since it will clarify the logical status of the notion of nibbana in the Dhamma. . . .

From a rejection of metaphysics (that is, the eternalistic metaphysics of the Upaniṣadic seers) on the one hand, and from a rejection on the other hand of materialistic empiricism, it does not follow necessarily that all metaphysical views are rejected. A metaphysical theory about nibbana very different from that of the Upaniṣadic ātman is not necessarily foreign to the central notions of the Dhamma.

Here 'denies', 'external person', and 'not necessarily foreign' require scrutiny. Kalansuriya thinks the Buddha (or the Buddhist position) denies the statement: 'once the external object (the external person) ceases to exist, ontologically, nothing exists.' There are a number of considerations here. The text does not depict Buddha as denying this in explaining Yamaka's diṭṭhi. Perhaps Kalansuriya takes it that annihilationism (ucchedavāda) is correctly

described in the statement above, and that Buddha is depicted as denying it. He does not mention the Sabbasutta, however, and can hardly be unaware that Kalupahana lays a great deal of emphasis on it.⁸ There, the statement which Kalansuriya takes as annihilationism is asserted. If Kalansuriya is to make a case for his view, he would have to supply an interpretation of the Sabbasutta or somehow argue that it is less important than Kalupahana thinks. But as he has done neither of these things, one cannot feel any ~~the~~ wiser by being confronted with a different text, that on Yamaka's diṭṭhi, thereby diverting attention from the Sabbasutta while not explaining the discrepancy between his statement of what the Buddha denies and what the Sabbasutta actually asserts.

On my reading of early Buddhism one has to interpret uccheda-vāda very differently from Kalansuriya. Interpreted as the view of Cārvāka that there is no rebirth, that at death one is completely destroyed ('the cutting off of an existent entity' is the phrase), the Buddha's insistence that he only illuminates suffering and the way to the eradication of suffering makes a good deal of sense. It is then really a middle path in the sense of an alternative between Hindu eternalism of the Upaniṣads and the materialism of Cārvāka. On the view I suggest, there is no difficulty reconciling the Sabbasutta with Yamaka's diṭṭhi, such as Kalansuriya would encounter if he confronted it. Since annihilationism is, pace Kalansuriya, not the statement he presents but that there is no rebirth or transmigration of any sort, the Buddha's unwillingness to accept it (N. B. he does not in any case deny it), and concern to clarify what he does say -- I preach dukkha and its cessation -- does not in any way conflict with the Sabbasutta passage.

I have already given reasons for opposing the Buddhist empiricism thesis. Thus I am in agreement with Kalansuriya's conclusion on this particular point, although not with his argument for his conclusion. For as that argument misinterprets ucchedavāda and slurs the logical independence of the Buddhist empiricism thesis and the parinibbāna as extinction thesis, it is unacceptable as an argument, however much one may agree with its conclusion. If my arguments are correct, then the former thesis is unacceptable, while the latter (on parinibbāna) is acceptable in a qualified manner as an implication of the early Buddhist doctrine, but not as a paraphrase of what is explicitly said in Pali. That is, there is no place in the Nikāya literature where the Buddha is depicted as saying 'parinibbāna is extinction'. On the other hand, he says that rebirth depends on conditions and that when the conditions are not there no rebirth occurs; that it would be absolute, complete folly to assert the continuance of any mind-related element under such circumstances.

Kalansuriya fails to distinguish between metaphysics, as a branch of philosophy, and religion. Sometimes he characterizes Buddhism as 'a simple religion with a difficult goal' and sometimes as metaphysical:⁹

From a rejection of metaphysics (that is, the eternalistic metaphysics of the Upanisadic seers) on the one hand, and from a rejection on the other hand of materialistic empiricism, it does not follow necessarily that all metaphysical views are rejected. A metaphysical theory about nibbana very different from that of the Upanisadic atman is not necessarily foreign to the central notions of the Dhamma.

Thus, while agreeing with Kalansuriya's admirable attempt to elucidate the dhamma within its proper context, it does not seem to be entirely successful in that he here tacitly does just what he

accuses Kalupahana of doing: regarding the Buddha as a philosopher rather than as a religious teacher. Only in this case Buddha is seen as a disguised metaphysician rather than as a disguised empiricist. I want to say, not that the Buddha is an example of an unreflective person, but that he is not an example of an epistemologist, metaphysician, or any other sort of philosopher as this term is used in the West. Of course this is not to dispute that philosophical training may be useful in elucidating Buddhism. Nor is it necessary to assume, falsely, that there was a sharp distinction between religion and philosophy at the time of the Buddha, but only this: one sees in the character of his life as reported, concerns which one should now call primarily religious rather than primarily philosophical. The setting aside of views (diṭṭhi) in contexts where this means 'speculative views' is not just a setting aside of metaphysics, but of philosophy as it is known in the West.

II

Part of the argument of the preceding section turns on the distinction between nibbāna and parinibbāna, and it is the defense of this distinction from a recent attack that is now undertaken.

Peter Masefield argues that while there is some textual evidence for the above-mentioned distinction, it cannot be maintained. He writes:⁹

Had the expression parinibbana and its related terms been found only in such contexts one might have been justified in assuming that parinibbana was always and only to be attained at death. Other passages, however, suggest that one already parinibbuto (9) could continue to live and remain active in the world; it is said, for instance, in the Udumbarika-Sihanada Sutta that the Lord, himself parinibbuto teaches Dhamma for the sake of (the attainment of) parinibbana (10), which must surely imply that at the time he was neither dead nor dying.

Similarly several passages elsewhere, dealing with those either attaining parinibbana or already parinibbuta, give no reason for us to suppose that the individuals in question are either dying or already dead (11).

And he supports this with notes:¹⁰

- 9 Past participle of parinibbayati and thus 'who has attained nibbana'.
- 10 Parinibbuto so Bhagava parinibbanaya dhammam deseti -- D iii 55.
- 11 See e.g. S iv 204; Sn 514 etc.

The choice of topic here is an ingenious one, for if it could be shown that there is no distinction operative an important contribution to Buddhist scholarship would be made. Nevertheless the argument is unsound, for the following reasons.

First, nothing at (10) guarantees the implication 'that at the time he was neither dead nor dying'. For (10), which may be translated as 'The Exalted One, having been finally enlightened, teaches the way by final enlightenment'. This does not mean that Buddha is somehow alive and teaching. It means that the Buddha has taught the doctrine by example. One can mean this and say that he teaches the way by example, just as one can say that Thomas More teaches the importance of conscience even if one has no thoughts of heaven and of More's continued existence. Since the Pali does not guarantee Masefield's implication, then D iii 55 is not conclusive evidence, and one need not agree that there is 'no reason for us to suppose that the individuals in question are either dying or already dead.' On my reading, the present tense of deseti is being used in a way which does not imply that Buddha is alive.

There may be other passages which Masefield is thinking of (see 11, 'etc. '), but the ones supplied at 11 are no more compelling than D iii 55, S iv 204 runs thus:

Yatha cetā nirujjhanti maggañca khayagāminam

Vedanānam khayā bhikkhu
nicchāto parinibbuto ti.

This has been translated as:¹¹

They cease, and what the way to feelings' end. That brother
who hath ended them, therefor
No longer hungereth. He is set free.

The context is that one who has eliminated pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings (vedanā) is parinibbuto. 'Set free' should not be taken as free in a relative sense (from something), where what is set free can go on existing. For Buddhist parinibbāna is not freedom from this or that particular condition, but 'freedom' in an extended sense -- freedom from all conditions. And talk of one who has eliminated pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings is not evidence that such a one is alive.

The other passage adduced as evidence, Sutta Nipāta 514, goes as follows:¹²

Pajjena katena attanā
parinibbānagato vitīṇṇakaṁ kho,
vibhavaṁ ca bhavaṁ ca vipphāya,
vusitavā khīṇapunabbhavo, -- sa "bhikkhu".

Lanman's translation reads:¹³

The 'Almsman true' is he
who treads his chosen path
up to Nirvana, quit
of doubts, not troubling if
life closes or runs on,
-- the man who greatly lived
and now hath slain rebirth.

Here the fact that rebirth is ended shows that parinibbāna in the usual sense as death of an Arahant is meant. There is no implication that he is actually 'in' parinibbāna while alive, but rather (as the translation shows), he has gone 'up to' this limit and has no concern for his own continuance.

It is not necessary to trace the other arguments Masefield gives concerning Buddhaghosa, the commentator, since I am just interested in safeguarding the nibbāna/parinibbāna distinction for early Buddhism, since the argument presented in section I here depends on it. This defense does not, however, involve the claim that 'parinibbāna' is only used as 'death of an Arahant'. As Gombrich observes:¹⁴

In Pali literature parinibbāna is sometimes a synonym of nibbāna (technically called sa-upādi-sesa); but modern Sinhalese usage, to which I have conformed, confines it to the death of an arhat (technically an-upādi-sesa).

Agreeing here with Gombrich I think that even if Masefield's arguments were successful, that would not show that in the sense in which parinibbāna means death of an arahat 'the attainment of parinibbana need not always entail the death of the individual concerned'. And to say:¹⁵

Now, that one could attain parinibbana and yet continue to live suggests that the distinction between the state attained by an enlightened person during his lifetime and the state attained by such an individual at his death cannot be maintained, or at least when this distinction is expressed in terms of nibbana and parinibbana.

is to vitiate the point by the last mentioned qualification ('or...'). For it may be admitted that sometimes 'parinibbāna' is used synonymously with 'nibbāna' so that the distinction is not between nibbāna and parinibbāna simpliciter, but between nibbāna and one sense of parinibbāna (to which it is contrasted as 'death of an Arhat'). That is all that needs to be 'maintained'. From the statement that one could attain parinibbāna₁ and live, it does not follow that there is no distinction to be maintained between nibbāna and parinibbāna (where p_2 = 'death of an Arahant').

Given that there are uses of parinibbāna according to which it

is applied to a living being, it does not follow that it is not used in a different way in contrast to nibbāna. Masefield argues that the distinction 'cannot be maintained'. In fact, the nibbāna/parinibbāna distinction is maintained, not only in contemporary Sri Lankan usage (as Gombrich observes), but in the Nikāyas themselves. The underlying assumption of Masefield's view on the matter seems to be that if one can show any instances counter to the general employment of 'parinibbāna' in opposition to 'nibbāna', such that it is used synonymously with nibbāna sometimes, then there is no distinction between the two. This is to treat the labyrinth of language as if it had to conform to the logician's 'real definition'. Quite independently of particular textual data, this is a specious argument, for from the fact that a word, n , is sometimes used synonymously with p_1 , it does not follow that there is no usage where n is contrasted with the other word in a different sense, p_2 .

A good example to support my point concerns the use of the word diṭṭhi. It is sometimes used just to mean 'view', even a correct view, and often to mean 'speculative view' in opposition to the dhamma which is according to 'right view' (sammā-diṭṭhi). But from the fact that it is sometimes used in contexts where the view referred to is a 'right view', it does not follow that there is no opposition between diṭṭhi and dhamma in the way in which these terms are often opposed.

III

Using the distinction between nibbāna and parinibbāna defended in II, what does amata mean as applied to nibbāna? In the following important passage the meaning of 'the deathless' is explained so

that it is clear that 'endless life' is not meant:¹⁶

Savatthi was the occasion. . .

Then a certain monk. . . said this to the Exalted One:

"The restraint of lust, the restraint of hatred, the restraint of illusion, " lord, is the saying, Pray, lord, what does this restraint imply? "

'It implies, monk, the realm of Nibbana. By it is meant the destruction of the asavas. '

At these words that monk said to the Exalted One:

"The deathless! The deathless " lord, is the saying. Pray, lord, what is the deathless, and what the way to the deathless? "

'That which is the destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of illusion, monk, -- that is called "the deathless". This same Ariyan eightfold way is the way to the deathless; to wit, right view. . . and the rest . . . right concentration.

Here 'the deathless' is simply the destruction of what defiles: passion, hatred, and confusion (rāga, dosa, moha). This applies to nibbāna, and now I would like to take up the question, what is meant by amata in case parinibbāna is alluded to by this term?

In answering this question it is necessary to articulate an important conclusion arguments for which have been provided in Ch. 4. I conclude that those who think that early Buddhism holds a belief in an immortal (in the sense of 'endless') psychic something which exists in a transcendental state after parinibbāna₂ is reached are mistaken.

Following on from this my task now becomes one of giving some answer to the question just posed which is consistent with the texts and also makes sense philosophically. A word about 'consistent with the texts': I do not mean that the texts set forth in unambiguous terms the particular interpretation which is to be given here, but that this interpretation which follows is nowhere contradicted by the texts and that textual evidence rules out alter-

native readings, such as ātmavāda. As for 'makes sense philosophically', there, too, certain things are ruled out. For the identity and conceivability problems of the view of immortality as 'endless life' are insurmountable,¹⁷ so that this would not be a live option to consider even if, counterfactually, the early Buddhist position embraced a view of 'endless life'. These problems are real ones for the early Buddhist 'rebirth link' view (as mentioned in Ch. 5), but they do not apply to parinibbāna as understood below.

Armed with these provisos I want to consider a remark from James Van Evra's article, 'On Death as a Limit':¹⁸

Pressing the analogy then: if my life has no end in just the way that my visual field has no limit, then it must be in the sense that I can have no experience of death, conceived as the complete cessation of experience and thought. That is, if life is considered to be a series of experiences and thoughts, then it is impossible for me to experience death, for to experience something is to be alive, and hence to be inside the bound formed by death.

Parinibbāna functions as a limit in an analogous way, I submit, only here it is the death of an arahat -- not just any death -- that counts as the limit of life, for life in early Buddhism is thought to continue often from death to rebirth. The distinction between the process of dying and death as a limit parallels that between nibbāna and parinibbāna, with the differences that nibbāna is 'dying to the world' rather than dying simpliciter, and parinibbāna is the limit of a 'person's' experience when conceived in the early Buddhist way. Dying is, but death is not, a process which can be experienced. And the depiction of parinibbāna par excellence, that of the Buddha, shows him lying prone in death, rather than dying convoluted with involuntary stomach pains due to Cunda the blacksmith's poisonous mushrooms. Parinibbāna, in the sense in which the term is contrasted with nibbāna, is the limit of a Buddhist stream of life, not

an experience in that stream.

Light from contemporary philosophy of religion along with sensitive textual analysis can together, I think, make very plain the sense in which immortality applies in early Buddhism, and thus answer a question which has puzzled commentators for centuries. First, it should be noted that there are two types of negation. And when 'amata' is predicated of nibbāna (as in the salient text in section I), this is not tantamount to asserting the utterance 'the Tathāgata exists after death', but instead is to deny that the word 'mata' (opposite of 'amata') applies to the Tathāgata. The Tathāgata leaves no tracks, is traceless, but not because he has invisible feet. Rather, ended is saṃsāra for the former person (collection of five khandha), where saṃsāra has attributes which do not apply to nibbāna.

The sense in which 'the deathless' applies in early Buddhism may be elucidated by extrapolating from Sutherland's treatment of immortality in the Christian tradition.¹⁹ Opting for neither of the two traditional views of immortality as disembodied consciousness or as resurrection of the body, he develops an alternative one. Sutherland claims that the belief in immortality is indeed a Christian belief, thus separating himself from those (like John Hick) who take the resurrection of the body view as primary and the immortality of the soul as a Greek accretion. Yet he reinterprets what this 'immortality' means so as to rule out of consideration the disembodied consciousness view.

With a respectful nod in the direction of Kierkegaard ('only in the ethical is there immortality in eternal life', Concluding Unscientific Postscript), Sutherland goes on to develop the idea that 'immortality', taken in the sense of 'eternal life' rather than

'endless life', means not mortal, not limited by death. A belief in eternal life is, then, a belief that it is possible to live in such a way that one is not limited by, but is independent of, death.

What kind of independence is Kierkegaard claiming obtains here? Sutherland suggests: one can make one's life have an in itself ethical dimension. One is not vulnerable to chance or change in living in this way.

There will doubtless be those who are unconvinced and who wish to interpret not just nibbāna in this life but parinibbāna also as some sort of 'transcendental state'. It is not clear whether Kalansuriya wants to go this far or just to interpret nibbāna in this life as transcendental. He sets out 'two views of nibbāna' and argues for Jayatilleke's interpretation of nibbāna as extinction. In this kind of talk it is sometimes not clear whether the nibbāna of a living adept is called 'transcendent' or that of the Arahat. In the former case it illuminates nothing whatsoever to use this word, and in the latter case it smacks, perversely of the eternalism set aside by the Buddha. In what follows I argue that neither of the 'two views of nibbāna' is acceptable, and that Kalupahana's view is the more nearly correct one on this point.

Nowhere in the early Buddhist literature does the Buddha assert any thesis about the afterlife of the Tathāgata. As previously discussed, he is shown as setting aside from consideration, without denying, the four possibilities viz., that the Tathāgata exists after death, does not, both exists in part and does not in respect to another part, and neither exists nor does not exist (as 'exists' does not apply). Simply, on the early Buddhist position one does not philosophize about the matter, because philosophizing is just another source of attachment. It is worth noticing that the fourth alternative, set aside by the Buddha, is compatible with the

'transcendental state' view of nibbāna. This fact should make one cautious of accepting that view, but is not by itself reason enough for rejecting it.

Although the early texts do not assert a philosophical view of the afterlife of a Tathāgata, there are textual considerations which point to the conclusion that, if one is to state what the early Buddhist position on parinibbāna₂ suggests (but does not explicitly state), then one should say that it suggests the Tathāgata's extinction rather than his continued existence. For first, the early Buddhist view takes it that the person is a composite of five aggregates (khandhas), while taking nibbāna as not a composite of any kind (asaṅkhata). And consciousness (viññāṇa) depends on conditions, in such a way that when the conditions are absent there is no consciousness.²⁰ This passage, by the way, is one which Kalansuriya ignores in the article cited, and is one which gives Kalupahana's contention of an extinction view in early Buddhism much of its plausibility.

Secondly, it is clear that nothing could 'survive in' parinibbāna₂, since anything which exists is compounded, conditioned, and part of the samsaric wheel of becoming, and hence plagued with dukkha, none of which could be true of the Tathāgata after death. Thus, the early Buddhist position is to be precisely stated as there is dukkha and its cessation (more fully in terms of the four noble truths, the last of which dovetails into the eight-fold noble path), rather than in terms of any thesis about the afterlife of a Tathāgata. Yet the early Buddhist position does suggest that there is no question of anything surviving in parinibbāna once the conditions for rebirth are gone. Consequently, if anyone wants to know (as Yamaka did) what the early position on the Tathāgata's continued

existence after death is, the correct answer is that there is none, since the question is not addressed pro or contra, but instead in keeping with the middle path (in one sense of that ideal), the emphasis is on dukkha and ending it. And if anyone wants to know what the early position suggests about the possibility of an immortal life in the sense of 'endless life' for the Tathāgata, one may point out that there is no question of anything existing as nothing remains.

Why, then, does one not find the early texts explicitly saying that parinibbāna₂ is extinction? First, I think that the answer to this lies in the persistent, religiously-oriented intention to avoid putting forth philosophical views up for argument and counter-argument, repeatedly expressed in early Buddhism. Secondly, since Cārvāka believes that extinction occurs, and since early Buddhism (by contrast with Cārvāka) suggests that extinction must be earned by adherence to a religious path, it may have been thought important not to state the latter point explicitly in order to avoid any possibility of a wrong-headed confusion of early Buddhism with Cārvāka. Thirdly, it is a conceptual, philosophical point (not an empirical one about unverifiability) that if parinibbāna₂ is extinction, then one cannot (logically) experience both sides of this limit. Thus in one's own case there is no question of being able to 'experience extinction' (as opposed to becoming extinct), and knowledge of the end of rebirth in the case of other beings would have to be distinguished from the sort of knowledge involved in one's own case, so that philosophical problems abound and it is unsurprising that early Buddhism remains aloof.

In conclusion, 'the deathless' (amata) when applied to nibbāna is just the destruction of passion of passion, hatred, and confusion (rāga, dosa, and moha) in the life of the living Buddhist adept. If

it is thought of as applied to parinibbāna, as Basak implies in the quotation with which section I here began, nothing in the texts justifies thinking of it as an everlasting thing or transcendental state. As for parinibbāna₂, it could be amata only in the sense of being a limit of the flux of rebirth, as the death -- not the process of dying -- of an Arahat. The deathless does not in either case involve belief in immortality as 'endless life', but only as 'eternal life', in Sutherland's sense.

Concluding Remark

The conclusion in outline is that although internal and external understanding are not mutually exclusive (Ch. 1), and early Buddhism is neither logically (Ch. 2) nor emotively flawed fundamentally (Ch. 3), there is a problem with the reidentification of the person on its view of rebirth (Ch. 4). This problem cannot be dispelled by appeal to the Buddhism empiricism thesis, according to which one properly trained can 'see' rebirth (Ch. 5). But in rejecting the Buddhist empiricism thesis it is not being suggested that parinibbāna is a 'transcendent state', for it may be understood as 'eternal life', rather than as 'endless life', in a way which does not conflict with the anatta doctrine (Ch. 6).

Notes: Ch. 6

¹Radhagovinda Basak, Lectures on Buddha and Buddhism (Calcutta, Sambodhi Publications, 1961), p. 110.

²Richard Gombrich, On Being Sanskritic A Plea for Civilized Study and the Study of Civilization, An Inaugural Lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on 14 October 1977 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 25.

³Ibid.

⁴Samyutta Nikāya IV, 373.

⁵K. N. Upadhyaya, Early Buddhism and the Bhagavad Gita (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 1971), p. 341.

⁶A. D. P. Kalansuriya, 'Two Modern Sinhalese Views of Nibbana' in Religion (London, Routledge Kegan Paul), vol. 9, Spring 1979, pp. 1- 11.

⁷Ibid. , pp. 3 and 5.

⁸D. J. Kalupahana, 'A Buddhist Tract on Empiricism' in Philosophy East & West 19 (1969), pp. 65-67. Also mentioned repeatedly in his Buddhist Philosophy, pp. 23 and 158.

⁹Kalansuriya, ibid.

¹⁰Peter Masefield, 'The Nibbana-Parinibbana Controversy' in Religion vol. 9, Autumn 1979, p. 216.

¹¹Kindred Sayings IV, 136.

¹²Sutta Nipāta 514.

¹³Harvard Oriental Series vol. 37, translated by Lanman, p.123.

¹⁴ Richard Gombrich, Precept and Practice (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 70, fn. 14.

¹⁵ Masefield, ibid., p. 217.

¹⁶ Samyutta Nikāya V, 8; cf. Woodward's translation V, 7.

¹⁷ Vide Stewart R. Sutherland, 'Immortality and Resurrection' in John Donnelly (ed.), Language, Metaphysics, and Death (New York, Fordham University Press, 1978), pp. 196-207, reprinted from Religious Studies 3, 1967-68, pp. 377-389.

¹⁸ James Van Evra, 'On Death as a Limit' in John Donnelly, op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁹ Stewart R. Sutherland, 'What Happens After Death?' in Scottish Journal of Theology 22 (1969).

²⁰ Majjhima Nikāya I, 256-257.

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